United Nations S/PV.7736

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7736th meeting
Tuesday, 12 July 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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16-21430 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bangladesh, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Wilfried I. Emvula, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the very important responsibility of the presidency of the Security Council.

Late last month, I returned from my eleventh visit to Israel and Palestine as the Secretary-General. As it happened, it was also as Israel's occupation entered into its fiftieth year. I carried a clear and consistent message to leaders on both sides, namely, that time was running out. That fact is also at the heart of the report of the Middle East Quartet. I know that the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, has fully briefed the Security Council. Some on both sides have criticized the report's contents and sought to dismiss its conclusions and recommendations. The report's overriding message, however, is irrefutable: as negative trends grow more frequent, the prospects for a two-State solution grow more distant. The report's 10 recommendations provide a practical approach to end the political stalemate, resume the transition to greater Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and chart a course towards negotiations to resolve all final status issues. I urge both sides to immediately begin discussions with the Quartet on implementing those recommendations as we all continue to work in coordination with key stakeholders, including regional countries and the Security Council, to restore hope in a political solution. The Quartet Envoys are now taking steps in that direction.

The parties will have to make the necessary compromises for peace. At the same time, the region and the wider international community must exercise their influence to encourage both sides. French efforts to pursue peace complement those efforts. I welcome their coordination with the Quartet. I also welcome Egyptian efforts, including the recent visit by the Egyptian Foreign Minister to Palestine and Israel.

The failure of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to advance peace has created a vacuum. Extremist voices have filled that space. Recent incidents reinforce the mounting risks. Those responsible for recent terror attacks must be held accountable. However, closures, such as those in Hebron, as well as punitive demolitions and blanket revocations of permits, penalize thousands of innocent Palestinians and amount to collective punishment.

I am also deeply troubled by shrinking space for civil society in the region and around the world. I am concerned by Israel's passage of the so-called "NGO Transparency Law", which contributes to a climate in which the activities of human rights organizations are increasingly delegitimized. All the while, Israel's settlement enterprise marches on. Days after the Quartet called on Israel to cease settlement construction and expansion, Israel announced plans to advance building

approximately 560 housing units in the West Bank and 240 more in occupied East Jerusalem. That is in flagrant disregard of international law. Those actions constitute an undeniable contradiction of Israel's official support for a negotiated two-State solution. I urge Israel to immediately cease and reverse those plans.

We must ask: How can the systematic expansion of settlements — the taking of land for exclusive Israeli use — and the denial of Palestinian development be a response to violence? Such policies will not bring the two-State solution closer to reality. Such policies will not make Israelis safer or more secure. As many former Israeli military and intelligence officers have clearly stated, those policies will do precisely the opposite. Indeed, every brick added to the edifice of occupation is another taken from Israel's foundation as a majority Jewish and democratic State. At the same time, those Palestinians who celebrate and encourage attacks against innocents must know that they are not serving the interests of their people or of peace. Such acts must be universally condemned and more must be done to counter the incitement that fuels and justifies terror.

During my visit I also made my fourth trip to Gaza. Militant activity continues, undermining the fragile ceasefire and threatening to provoke another devastating escalation. Despite significant progress, tens of thousands of people are still displaced following the 2014 conflict. Families are forced to live without electricity for 12 to 18 hours per day. Unemployment remains staggering. Funds to rebuild Gaza remain elusive. I once again urge donors to fulfil their pledges made in Cairo. But long-term stability and sustainability for Gaza depends on the lifting of the crippling closures and a re-establishment of a single, legitimate Palestinian governing authority based on Palestine Liberation Organization principles.

Turning very briefly to the Golan, I would add that the situation remains volatile and continues to undermine the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria, thereby jeopardizing the ceasefire between the two countries.

As we focus on Israeli-Palestinian peace, we must take a hard look at where the conflict stands. How much longer can the parties and the international conirnunity accept political paralysis, and at what grave price? I encourage the Security Council to support the efforts of the Quartet to work with the parties, the region and interested stakeholders in advancing peace. The children of Israel and Palestine deserve nothing less.

I will never forget my moving meeting with student leaders at a school in Gaza of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on my final day in the region. One 15-year-old boy concluded by saying,

> "Harsh restrictions drain away the ambitions of any young person. And this is how we see our future — to be killed by the conflict, to be killed by the closure or to be killed by despair."

Surely, we can do better for all the children of Palestine and Israel. Surely, they deserve a horizon of hope.

It is time for the parties to take action to build that future. The international community, including through the recommendations outlined in the Quartet's report, remains resolute in its commitment to support the goal of a peaceful future for both Palestinians and Israelis. That is why I encourage the Security Council to support the efforts of the Quartet — of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations — to work with the parties, the region and interested stakeholders in advancing peace.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, I congratulate the delegation of Japan on its skilled leadership as President of the Security Council and I express my appreciation for the convening of this important open debate. I also thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for being with us today and for his valuable briefing to the Council. It was delightful recently to see him visit the State of Palestine and to receive the highest order decoration by President Abbas in Ramallah. It was a special moment and I was delighted to witness that special moment.

The Security Council is meeting against the backdrop of an extremely volatile and tense situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and ongoing deadlock in the efforts to create a viable political horizon to resolve once and for all this deadly, destructive and tragic conflict. It is also meeting against the backdrop of ongoing regional and international initiatives aimed at

salvaging the two-State solution and the prospects for peace and charting a way forward for their realization. Regrettably, however, for various reasons, none of those initiatives have come to fruition and the political will to act responsibly and boldly — in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in the interest of justice and human rights and for the sake of peace and security — remains perilously absent.

The Arab States continue to extend their hand in peace, supporting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, while also striving to open up a new era of peace, stability and security in our region. For over 14 years, the Arab Peace Initiative has offered a bold path forward, and yet Israel, the occupying Power, remains intransigent, belittling that most significant initiative, failing to reciprocate time and time again, and obstructing the revival of a political horizon on its basis. Israel has also stood in rejection of the important multilateral effort for peace undertaken in the context of the French initiative to establish an international support group for Palestinian-Israeli peace and set the foundations for an international peace conference aimed at bringing the parties together to finally resolve the conflict.

In this regard, while underscoring its limitations and the need for further bold steps commensurate with professed intentions and commitments and the real urgency of the matter, we recognize the joint communiqué issued by the participants in the Middle East peace initiative meeting held on 3 June in Paris. We reaffirm our continued cooperation in this regard and appeal for ongoing coordination and efforts to advance that initiative and the prospects for peace.

The most recent international initiative is that undertaken by the Middle East Quartet, which on 1 July released a long-awaited report. Unfortunately, the report did not meet expectations, failing to rise to the urgent needs of this critical juncture and regrettably failing to acknowledge the gravity of the nearly half-century of Israeli foreign occupation of our land and its existence as the primary source of the instability, violence and violations we are witnessing; its impact on every single aspect of Palestinian life, scarring and depriving one generation after another for decades, forcing them to live in a perpetual state of oppression and misery in which they are being denied every human right; and its total incompatibility with any peace effort predicated on international law and justice and the two-State solution, as per the long-standing global consensus.

After nearly 50 years of occupation; after more than 20 years of negotiations; and after nearly 70 years of the question of Palestine remaining unresolved on the United Nations agenda and constituting an open, painful bleeding wound in the international body and a threat to international peace and security, we expected and were promised more from the Quartet. The patience exhibited not just by Palestine but also by other regional and international partners was clearly based on a belief that this time the Quartet would rise to the responsibilities it has assumed and make bold recommendations to address the main challenges, including the final status issues, aimed at finally and definitively ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, that began in June 1967 and achieving the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders, and a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Regrettably, this was not the case. The Palestinian leadership has clearly expressed its deep disappointment and dismay regarding the report and the manner in which it deals with critical and sensitive issues, or fails to do so. This includes the report's glaring failure to deal appropriately with the ongoing criminal actions, illegal measures and constant provocations being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against our people and land. It also includes the repeated inappropriate attempts to draw a symmetry between the occupying Power and the occupied people and to equate individual acts of violence with the official, deliberate policies and actions of the occupying Power, which are the source of this conflict and all of its ills. Moreover, the report represents yet another attempt to manage the conflict, rather than reaffirm the principles and parameters of a final and just solution and define the means for reaching that objective within a set timeframe and with the necessary international support and guarantees.

The report's characterization of nearly every Israeli action as simply a response to Palestinian actions, rather than as part of systematic, deliberate and decades-long policies and practices, is unacceptable and offensive. This is the case whether in reference to the use of administrative detention against Palestinians, punitive

home demolitions, the severe closures, the provocations and incursions at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or the killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli occupying forces in military raids or demonstrations. Equally offensive is the implication that security is only a need and a right for Israel, while this right for the Palestinian people, along with their need and right to protection as occupied people, is ignored.

The inability of the Quartet report to refer to the incessant violence, destruction, intimidation and barbarism of some extremist Israeli settlers as terrorism, including the burning to death of a young family as they slept in their home, while repeatedly and liberally characterizing Palestinian actions as such, is telling of the narrative adopted. In this regard, as the report actually does in one instance, we would point to the reflections and statements of senior Israeli officials — both military and political — referring to such actions as terror and cautioning about the extreme dangers posed by such individuals and groups to the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation and to Israeli society itself.

Not the least of this is the incitement to violence, the vicious hatred and racist extremism routinely fomented by Israeli settlers and Jewish extremists against the Palestinian people and often declared as well by numerous Israeli officials and religious leaders who are on the Israeli Government's payroll and continue their malicious incitement against the Palestinian people and their leadership. The Palestinian people are suffering immensely from such inflammatory and racist rhetoric and incitement, which continue to fuel terror and hate crimes against innocent Palestinian civilians. Yet, rather than go into further detail in the context of this debate about the extent and impact of such Israeli extremism, we would refer to the many recent statements made in this regard by several Israeli leaders themselves, who are directly addressing this dangerous phenomenon and illness as we speak.

We note the Quartet's recognition of the destructive nature of Israel's settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and that its designation of occupied Palestinian land for exclusive Israeli use, whether for military or settler purposes, its confiscation of Palestinian property and demolition of Palestinian homes, and denial of Palestinian development are part and parcel of this illegal settlement campaign. Moreover, the persistence of such illegal policies and practices certainly raise serious questions about Israel's long-term intentions, as noted by the report. Those intentions are reconfirmed by the statements of some Israeli Ministers, including the Prime Minister himself, that "there should never be a Palestinian State", as opposed to the deceptive statements that we hear in this Chamber from the representative of the occupying Power.

It is an understatement to say that, through this illegal network of colonies and infrastructure Israel, is entrenching its occupation daily, hammering one nail after another into the coffin of the two-State solution. While the report rightly concludes that all of this is eroding the viability of the two-State solution, it fails to affirm that Israel stands in grave violation of international law, including humanitarian and criminal law, in its implementation of its settlement schemes and constant attempts to de facto annex the Palestinian land.

In that regard, we note the report's finding that at least 70 per cent of so-called Area C, which actually comprises 60 per cent of the West Bank, has been expropriated for exclusive Israeli use. Nearly all of the 30 per cent that remains, much of it private Palestinian property is, as noted in the report,

> "effectively off-limits for Palestinian development because it requires permits from the Israeli military authorities that are almost never granted".

That fact alone is telling of the Israelis' true intentions in occupied Palestine, where the Israeli settler population now exceeds half a million and the construction of settlements and related infrastructure continues every single day.

Actually, in an immediate response to the Quartet's report, the Israeli Government provocatively approved the construction of another 800 housing units and illegal settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem. That is further proof that the failure to hold Israel accountable for its violations and to take bold measures for peace, as opposed to recommending piecemeal confidence-building measures, is a mistaken and futile approach that will only be met with further Israeli contempt and arrogance.

As for the situation in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's inhumane and illegal blockade continues to be imposed and the man-made humanitarian catastrophe continues to deepen, the report neglects to address the underlying issues and the flagrant violations that are being perpetrated by the occupying Power as it collectively

punishes the entire Palestinian civilian population there. In that regard, despite the regrettable political divide and the ongoing efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation and unity as a matter of national urgency, the failure to bridge that divide cannot be used as an excuse to continue imprisoning nearly 2 million people and forcing them to live in the ruins of war and mass deprivation.

In that context, I wish to conclude my statement by conveying to Council members the depths of the despair, hopelessness and human devastation that the Israeli occupation and the ongoing Israeli aggression have inflicted on our people for decades. They are among the dimensions that we believe the Quartet report did not properly, sensitively or respectfully address. But I hope that today those matters will be heard and felt and responsibly acted upon as I read to you excerpts from a letter to the international community from a Palestinian, Rafat Badran, the father of a young Palestinian boy, Mahmoud Badran, who was brutally murdered by the Israeli occupying forces on 21 June. By the way, when the Secretary-General was in Ramala he met the father, his wife and his family. These are his words:

> "Last Friday, my wife Amal and I lived our greatest nightmare when we buried our precious son Mahmoud. He was 15 years old.
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> "A few days earlier, he was enjoying an evening of relative normalcy, an occurrence all too rare in the life of a Palestinian child. It was the holy month of Ramadan, and after spending time celebrating with our family, Mahmoud, along with his friends and cousins, ventured out to a local village pool. After swimming for several hours, the group piled into the car to return home, smiling and fatigued, relishing some relief from the pervasive and cruel conditions of Israeli military occupation. And then suddenly, Israeli soldiers riddled the car that Mahmoud was riding in with bullets, hitting several of the children. Four of them are still recovering from their wounds. Mahmoud was killed.
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> "Mahmoud was a gentle child who focused on his studies. He had two great ambitions: to become a doctor and help others and to play for his favourite soccer club, Real Madrid. He cleverly planned to attend medical school in Spain so that he could pursue both of these dreams at once. Now he is gone, and the sudden void left in our lives can never be filled. It is still impossible to comprehend. We are left only to ask why.
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> "The Israeli forces claim they were responding to stone throwers. Israel considers it reasonable to respond to children throwing stones with machine-gun fire, which is itself an inhumane, extreme policy. But Mahmoud and the other boys were not throwing stones. They were sitting in a car, driving home, wrapped in towels and swimsuits and posing no threat to anyone when they were ambushed by occupying forces.
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> "For Palestinians, this sort of tragedy is nothing new. I have lived under decades of Israeli military occupation, and my children were born into this brutal reality and have known no other life. As a parent, I have struggled each and every day with how much freedom to allow my children and how to carve out some semblance of a normal life for them under wildly abnormal circumstances ... My wife and I took the former path and hoped for the best, but now, the worst pain imaginable has arrived on our doorstep ...
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> "Time and again, Palestinian civilians — children, women and men — have been killed by Israeli fire in situations where lethal force is utterly unjustified. Recently, the world watched as an Israeli soldier executed a Palestinian by shooting him in the head as he lay wounded on the ground and totally surrounded. Although this cold-blooded murder was caught on video and created controversy in Israel, many rallied to support the murderous soldier, including Israeli politician Avigdor Lieberman, who was shortly thereafter named Defence Minister and is now responsible for overseeing the military occupation.
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> "An extremist climate prevails in today's Israel and never before has the value of Palestinian life been so cheap. Our bodies, our minds, our passions, our very lives and by extension, our deaths, are all considered lesser, and nothing makes this clearer to us than our repeated slaying at the hands of the Israeli military and the subsequent refusal to bring us justice. It is important to recall that as the occupying Power, Israel is obligated under international law to ensure the well-being of the civilian population — we the Palestinians. Instead, we have witnessed the ongoing and intensifying

brutalization of Palestinian bodies to the point where our lives are treated as entirely expendable.

"We Palestinians want a life of peace, freedom, justice and equality. We want the basic human dignity of not having our lives arbitrarily ended. We want to be able to know that, if our children leave the house to do the things children do, like going to school, playing soccer and going swimming, their lives are not at risk.

"So many Palestinian parents have lost their children to Israeli bullets fired in order to preserve an unjust system of military occupation, denying an entire nation of people their human rights. Mahmoud is but the most recent innocent victim. I write to you today as a grieving father because you, the international community, who are allowing Israel to sustain its brutal occupation into its fiftieth year, can help make sure that Mahmoud is among the last of the lives taken. I ask that you demand accountability from both the Israeli Government and your own and stand with the calls for freedom, justice and peace".

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): I am appearing before the Council today at a particularly troubling time for my country. Over the past few weeks, Israelis sitting in a restaurant were massacred while having dinner, a young girl was stabbed to death in her own bed and a father was killed and buried by his 10 children after he was shot to death while driving home for Shabbat service with his family. These vicious acts of terrorism did not take place in a vacuum. They are a direct result of the continuous Palestinian incitement.

Last week, while the Palestinians were embarking on the latest murderous wave of terror, the Quartet issued their report on the major threats to achieving a negotiated peace. From their report, we learn that Palestinian Authority officials have not condemned terror attacks against Israelis. I quote, "streets, squares and schools have been named after Palestinians who have committed acts of terrorism". The report also noted that officials from Abbas's own Fatah faction referred to these terrorists as "heroes and a crown on the head of every Palestinian". There is a direct line between the incitement to hatred spread by Abbas's Palestinian Authority and the despicable acts of terrorism taking place in Israel.

The hateful rhetoric of the Palestinian leadership begins at the top. In his recent speech to the European Parliament, Abbas himself repeated an outrageous lie that Israel seeks to poison the Palestinians' water supply. He said, "certain rabbis in Israel have said very clearly to their Government that our water should be poisoned in order to have Palestinians killed". That vicious slander is rooted in centuries-old fabricated accusations against Jews for poisoning wells. It is a blood libel, pure and simple. No press release can undo the damage or revoke the call to violence sent with these hateful words.

In the very same speech, Abbas even went as far as to blame all terrorism in the Middle East — in fact, all terrorism in the world — on Israel, saying, "Once the occupation ends, terrorism will disappear; there will be no more terrorism in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world." Apparently, if it were not for Israel, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham would not behead innocents in Syria or murder dozens of people in Istanbul and Bagdad and a terrorist would not have massacred 50 people at a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender nightclub in Orlando. With the endless stream of incitement coming from the Palestinian leadership, it is no surprise that those words of hate translate into acts of violence against Israelis.

Less than two weeks ago, Israelis witnessed a particularly cruel and vile act of terrorism. Early in the morning, a 17-year-old Palestinian broke into the home of the Ariel family, locked the door and proceeded to stab 13-year-old Hallel to death. Hallel, an innocent girl who was sleeping late after dancing at her recital the night before, was killed in what should be the safest place known to any child — her own bedroom, her own bed.

What can drive a young boy to pick up a knife and repeatedly stab a 13-year-old child sleeping in her own bed? The hateful act of that 17-year-old terrorist is the direct result of years of indoctrination in Palestinian Authority schools, hate broadcasted on official Palestinian Authority television and, more recently, calls to kill Jews in Facebook posts and Twitter feeds. As the Quartet's recent report rightly points out, the international community must send a clear message to the Palestinian leadership: stop inciting and start talking. Israelis want and pray for peace, but we cannot make any progress unless the Palestinians put an end to terror and incitement and finally agree to direct, face-to-face negotiations.

Yet, time after time, the Palestinian leadership has failed on both counts. Prime Minister Netanyahu has said repeatedly, including only two days ago, that he would meet with President Abbas any time to work to end the conflict. Yet, Abbas has made it clear that he has no time to talk peace. It is therefore no surprise that, when the President of the European Parliament invited Abbas to meet with the President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, in Brussels last month, Abbas refused the opportunity. Talking peace with Israel's President was not on Abbas's agenda for his visit to Europe. He was too busy spreading vile lies and peddling anti-Semitic conspiracies.

Unfortunately, Abbas's refusal to negotiate is incentivized by some in the international community. Plans for international initiatives that seek to impose a solution on the two sides send exactly the wrong message. They tell the Palestinians they can achieve all their goals while continuing to encourage terror and refusing to even talk with Israel. Let me be clear — the only way to achieve peace for the region is by building a strong foundation. This foundation must consist of three pillars: an end to all terrorism and incitement, an end to the Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people, and Palestinian willingness to directly negotiate with Israel. Any attempt to bypass direct talks will only encourage the Palestinians to continue to avoid real negotiations.

It is troubling that the Quartet report repeated the fiction that Israeli construction in Judea and Samaria is an obstacle to peace. When Israel froze construction in these Jewish communities, it did not get peace. When Israel uprooted every Jewish town and village in Gaza, 11 years ago, it did not get peace; it got war. Some today may try to balance their criticism of Palestinian terror by condemning Israeli construction. Some might even criticize construction while ignoring Palestinian terrorism. Israel strongly rejects any attempt to draw moral equivalence between construction and terrorism.

We have gathered to discuss the Middle East. It requires us, today, to discuss one of the main causes of instability and chaos in the region — the activities of the internationally recognized terror organization Hezbollah. Exactly 10 years ago, on 12 July 2006, the terrorist group Hezbollah, a proxy of Iran, unleashed a carefully planned attack against Israel. This unprovoked attack instigated a 34-day war. For 34 days, the citizens of Israel were forced to run for their lives at the sound of the siren and spend their nights sleeping in bomb shelters.

When the war ended, the Council, in this Chamber, pledged that Hezbollah would no longer be allowed to threaten Israel and hold the people of Lebanon hostage. Resolution 1701 (2006) required "the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that ... there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State".

I have the unfortunate task of informing the Council today that, 10 years later, the situation has gone from bad to worse. The implementation of those critical requirements of the resolution never happened. The Government of Lebanon never stopped Hezbollah and Hezbollah never stopped its military build-up.

Moreover, the world simply stopped paying attention. When resolution 1701 (2006) was adopted, Hezbollah had 7,000 rockets. Today, they have over 120,000 rockets and missiles. This is a larger arsenal than that of all European NATO countries combined. In simple terms, there are more missiles hidden underground in the 10,000 square kilometers of Lebanon than there are above ground in the over 4 million square kilometres of all the European NATO allies combined. For years, in speech after speech and in letter after letter, Israel has warned the Council of the dangers of the illegal smuggling and the continued build-up in southern Lebanon, but these warnings have fallen on deaf ears. The results are plain for all to see. Hizbullah has transformed the villages of southern Lebanon into terror outposts, placing rocket-launchers next to schools and hospitals and storing missiles in living rooms.

We have decided to share with the Council our latest intelligence about Hizbullah's activities I would ask Council members to turn their attention to the last page in the hand-out that has been distributed in the Chamber. It contains an aerial photograph of the village of Shagra in southern Lebanon, just a few kilometres from the border with Israel. Shagra is a village with a population of 4,000, and consists of over 1,100 buildings. One out of every three buildings in Shagra has been turned by Hizbullah terrorists into military positions. I ask representatives to look at the example marked "one" in yellow. It shows a Hizbullah rocket-launcher, an infantry position and ammunition depots. The terrorists chose to hide their positions in-between homes and to place them just a few metres from the

three schools shown in blue. In the example marked "two" in yellow, representatives will again see a rocket-launcher, arms depots and an infantry position. The blue square that these weapons of war are next to is a mosque — a holy house of prayer. Council members can see it with their own eyes. These are actual pictures that were taken only recently.

This is exactly what we mean when we say that Hizbullah is committing a double war crime. Not only is it attacking Israeli civilians, but it is using Lebanese civilians as human shields to defend its terror activity. We are dealing with a terror group that operates as a State within a State. Hizbullah is a threat to Israel, to Lebanon and to the entire region. This is not the assessment of the State of Israel alone. It is the official stance of the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General warned in his report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006),

> "Should Hizbullah's possession of arms or attempts to procure sophisticated weapons provoke conflict, the consequences are potentially very grave for Lebanon and for the region" (*S/2016/189, para. 66*).

Ten years have passed since resolution 1701 (2006) was adopted, and Hizbullah has only enhanced its military capabilities. The longer the Council ignores this threat, the more dangerous it becomes to the entire region. The United States, the European Union and the League of Arab States have already condemned Hizbullah's terrorist activities. It is about time that the Council recognized Hizbullah as a deadly terrorist organization and begin to act accordingly.

There is one regional Power that openly supports Hizbullah. The lifeline of Hizbullah flows directly from Tehran. Hizbullah Secretary-General Nasrallah recently confessed to this fact in his own words:

> "Hizbullah's budget and expenses come from the Islamic Republic of Iran; our allocated money is coming to us in the same way we receive the rockets with which we threaten Israel."

And Hizbullah is not the only terror organization on Iran's payroll. In fact, over 60 per cent of the budget of the military wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad also comes from Iran. It is clear that behind the Ayatollah's smile campaign, Iran remains the driving force for hostility and the engine of instability in the Middle East.

Let me be clear. Should Iran's proxy, Hizbullah, make the miscalculation that it did 10 years ago in 2006, Israel will be ready to defend its citizens in the most vigorous and forceful way possible. For the sake of the integrity and credibility of this institution, and for the sake of stability in the region, we expect the Council to demand that the Government of Lebanon fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and remove the Hizbullah terrorists from southern Lebanon. Doing so would not only be the right thing to do, but would also distance the prospects of war and increase the chance for long-lasting stability in our region.

The President: I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his sobering presentation.

Across the Middle East, we see trends moving in the wrong direction — of rising violence, of political leaders choosing conflict over peace, of innocent people paying the price as conflicts fester. Today, I will discuss those trends in Israeli, Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian contexts, and what we can do to help reverse them. Let me begin with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We share the Secretary-General's serious concern about the situation on the ground, especially the violence against innocent civilians. There is absolutely no justification for terrorism or for the taking of innocent lives. That is why we condemn in the strongest terms the unconscionable terrorist attack last week in the West Bank, where a 13-year old girl, Hallel Ariel, was stabbed to death in her own home as she slept. In recent months, there has been a steady stream of violence on both sides of the conflict. On 21 June, as we heard, a 15-year old Palestinian boy, Mahmoud Badran, was killed when returning home from a night out at a water park in the West Bank, in what the Israeli army said was an accidental shooting. Shortly thereafter, clashes broke out at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount during Ramadan. We offer our most sincere condolences to the families of Hallel and Mahmoud, and to all victims of senseless acts of violence.

Israel has just announced the advancement of hundreds of settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. If implemented, that would be the latest step in what seems to be a systematic process of land seizures, settlement expansions and legalizations of outposts that is fundamentally undermining the prospects for a two-

State solution. As the Quartet report makes clear, this is not just about settlement construction. It is a broader process that includes not giving permits for Palestinian development and demolishing the homes and structures of Palestinians. As the report finds, the population of settlements has more than doubled since the Oslo process began in 1993. Settlement activity is incompatible with a two-State solution and counterproductive to the cause of peace. The report is clear that Israel should cease the policy of settlement construction and expansion, designating land for exclusive Israeli use, and denying Palestinian development.

The Quartet report reflects our concern about the trends on the ground that are imperilling a two-State solution, such as violence, terrorism and incitement to violence, the settlement construction and expansion, and the political and humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are concerned that continuing on the current course will make the prospects of a two-State solution increasingly remote and risk entrenching a one-State reality. The Quartet report's main objective is to provide a way forward to achieve the goal that is shared by all on the Council — a negotiated two-State solution. That way forward requires both sides to take all necessary steps to prevent violence and protect the lives and property of all civilians. The Palestinian Authority should act decisively to cease incitement to violence and clearly condemn all acts of terrorism, and both sides must refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric.

Finally, the report rightly recognizes the challenging situation in Gaza and the threat it poses to the two-State solution. This includes the build-up of illicit arms and militant activity in Gaza, which must be terminated. The report also outlines in detail the very dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, with 1.3 million Gazans in need of sustained humanitarian assistance. The international community must accelerate Gaza reconstruction and assistance. The report stresses the urgent need for affirmative steps to reverse each of these trends and calls on both parties to independently demonstrate through policies and actions a genuine commitment to a two-State solution. In other words, the parties should take steps now to move towards creating a peaceful two-State reality on the ground. The Quartet report provides a constructive path forward to help create the conditions for meaningful negotiations.

In Lebanon, the country's politicians must show leadership and flexibility by electing a president in accordance with Lebanon's Constitution and national pact. Two years of a presidential stalemate have hobbled the Government at a time when the country faces profound security risks, as demonstrated by the recent suicide attacks in the village of Al-Qaa. That is why the United States is helping the Lebanese Armed Forces build the capabilities necessary to counter violent extremism and protect the Lebanese people, an essential effort that more Governments should support.

In Syria, the Al-Assad regime continues to attack civilians, besiege cities and prevent humanitarian aid from reaching those whose lives depend on it. Even as the regime and opposition committed to refraining from attacks during Eid Al-Fitr, the Al-Assad regime violated this commitment by continuing attacks on Daraya, outside of Damascus, as well as in Aleppo and Homs. The Al-Assad regime's attacks over the past week demonstrate its aim to encircle and cut off access to Syrians in the eastern part of Aleppo, with potentially devastating consequences. A besieged eastern Aleppo City would represent the largest such population in the country, with hundreds of thousands of additional Syrians cut off from regular access to aid. Russia, as a co-sponsor of the cessation of hostilities, should use its influence on the regime to help stop those attacks.

On the humanitarian front, more than 590,000 people remain trapped in 18 besieged areas. In most of those cases, the regime and its allies continue to deliberately obstruct access to Syrians in desperate need of food and basic medicine. The regime regularly challenges the United Nations on the number of beneficiaries who need assistance in these besieged locations, trying to argue that the United Nations should be stocking even less aid in its convoys.

The challenges to accessing these besieged areas remain immense. Take one example: the town of Madaya near Damascus, which is besieged by the Al-Assad regime. The people of Madaya are dependent on humanitarian deliveries for survival. Otherwise, they would be putting their lives in great danger if they tried to leave to get food, medicine or other basic supplies. According to a report from Physicians for Human Rights and the Syrian-American Medical Society, released just today, Madaya is surrounded by approximately 65 checkpoints. The report explains that each of those checkpoints can include military personnel, snipers and heavy weaponry. Between the town and the checkpoints, the report further notes, up to 12,000 landmines and a network of dirt mounds and

trenches keep the town's 40,000 residents trapped. That is one landmine for every three residents.

These conditions are, needless to say, not conducive to resuming intra-Syrian negotiations. In December 2015, the Security Council unanimously expressed support for resolution 2254 (2015) for a Syrian-led political process that establishes credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance. Getting a genuine cessation of hostilities back on track is critical to this goal. The Syrian people desperately need a reduction in violence and sufficient humanitarian aid.

In Daraya, another town outside of Damascus besieged by the Al-Assad regime, Fatima Lahham recently told a reporter about her 7-year-old daughter, Maram. Maram is going deaf. While others run for shelter when regime aircraft approach the town, Maram just cannot hear them coming. When special batteries in Maram's hearing aids run out, Fatima, her mother, has noticed that Maram will not take the hearing aids out. According to Fatima, she says, "No, they might make me hear". Although a recent aid convoy made it possible for her to get a new set of batteries, Fatima is deeply anxious about what will happen to her daughter when they run out again in a few weeks. Now when young Maram draws pictures of people running away from bombs, Fatima sees that there is a little girl who is not running away, because she cannot hear. Those are the consequences for just one family of the Al-Assad regime's sieges. It is horrifying to think of what will happen if continued Syrian and Russian air strikes could force another 300,000 people in and around Aleppo to endure the same fate.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the precedency of the Security Council for the month of July and to thank France for having guided our work during the month of June. We also thank you for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, to which we listened carefully and which we fully endorse.

Once again, Uruguay expresses its emphatic condemnation of the actions of terrorist groups operating within the region. We are convinced that the attacks against the lives and dignity of innocent civilians carried out through terrorism and violent extremism must not be tolerated in any part of the world. Uruguay is concerned about the growing destabilizing impact of such groups, whose actions negatively affect the possibility of achieving sustainable solutions to the ongoing conflicts in the region and believes that it is essential to strengthen international cooperation at all levels to allow the development of national capacities necessary to address that threat.

Uruguay maintains a deep friendship with both the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. We have not lost hope that both peoples will be able to overcome their differences and reach an understanding on the key issues that separate them. Uruguay reaffirms its support for the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders in an atmosphere of cooperation and free from any threat or acts that breach the peace. Uruguay believes that resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) remain in effect. And I reiterate Uruguay's position regarding the unacceptability of the acquisition of territory by force. In that regard, Uruguay believes that it is essential that the international community step up its efforts to support the process and encourages the parties to return to the negotiating table.

Uruguay considers the recent report of the Quartet as an important contribution to move forward in the search for solutions to the Middle East peace process. However, we are concerned about the trends that threaten the viability of the two-State solution identified in the Quartet's report, such as the ongoing violence, the terrorist attacks and incitement to violence; the ongoing policy of settlement construction and expansion, the designation of land for exclusive Israeli use and the denial of Palestinian development; and the increase in illegal weapons and militant activity and continued lack of Palestinian unity and the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Uruguay regrets that those trends continue. We are surprised by the continued policy of settlement expansion and that, only four days before the publication of the report, Israel made public its decision to build 560 new homes in the West Bank and 240 in East Jerusalem. The continued policy of settlement construction undermines the physical viability of the two-State solution. At the same time, Uruguay condemns the recent terrorist attack carried out in Tel Aviv, which left four people dead and several others wounded. We also condemn the loss of Palestinian lives in equally regrettable situations.

It is necessary to encourage the parties to create the conditions necessary for the implementation of

the recommendations contained in the Quartet report aimed at restarting negotiations between the parties and adopting actions and policies that demonstrate their commitment to the two-State solution. In order to move towards a definitive solution, it is important for the international community to step up its efforts to support the process and encourage the parties to resume dialogue

Uruguay welcomes the final communiqué of the peace conference for Israel and Palestine held in Paris on 3 June, which acknowledged the importance of implementing economic incentives in terms of cooperation in order to unlock the current impasse and promote the economic and social development of the Palestinian people. Strengthening and establishing national institutions and basic infrastructure are essential to ensuring the viability of the Palestinian State, which has embarked upon the path of declaring itself a fully fledged State.

Unfortunately, there are other conflicts affecting the Middle East, especially those involving the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Iraq and Libya, which, albeit is not part of the region, is related to it. The situation in Syria is an affront to human dignity, with thousands of refugees and dead civilians, unremitting terrorist actions and a complete lack of agreement between the different parties involved to reach a negotiated political settlement. Uruguay commends the role that is played by the Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and encourages all parties to continue making efforts to reach an early political solution and respect the ceasefire that has been agreed to.

Uruguay underscores the efforts of the international community and particularly those of humanitarian workers, who despite many difficulties on the ground continue to work so that humanitarian aid reaches the neediest people. Uruguay reiterates its condemnation of the use of hunger as a tactic of war and strongly calls on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Uruguay also condemns the deliberate targeting of medical personnel and medical facilities and urges compliance with resolution 2286 (2016), which was adopted by the Council in May.

Increased international efforts are needed to keep Syrian children from becoming a lost generation as a result of, among other problems, the lack of educational opportunities, their recruitment as child soldiers and forced marriage at an early age. For Uruguay, access to education is a right that must be guaranteed without distinction.

The only possible solution to the conflict in Syria is a political solution. To that end, progress must be made in the peace talks under way, and a transition process must be facilitated as a way to achieve lasting solutions to the current conflict. The transition should be led by the Syrian people, whose interests should be considered, with the provisions of resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) being respected and taken into account.

Uruguay recognizes the progress made since the start of negotiations in Kuwait on Yemen, which was made possible by the cessation of hostilities reached in that country and by progress in terms of security. This has also enabled humanitarian aid to reach areas that were previously inaccessible. In this task, the outstanding work done by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, should be acknowledged.

Nevertheless, Uruguay is dismayed at the escalation of terrorist attacks, particularly those perpetrated by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State, both of which have benefited from the power vacuum that has existed in Yemen. For Uruguay, the killing of children — no matter by whom — is unacceptable. In this regard, we have followed with concern the statements made by the Secretary-General with respect to his motivations for removing the name of a country from the list of parties responsible for committing the gravest violations against children published in the section on Yemen in annex I of his annual report on children in armed conflict (S/2016/360).

In Syria and Yemen, civilian populations are not merely incidental victims of the conflicts unleashed there. They are not what is euphemistically called "collateral damage". In Syria and Yemen, civilians are deliberately targeted by warring factions. This is clearly demonstrated by the type of weapons used in such conflicts, which are fired directly on civilians: barrel bombs, thermobaric explosives, cluster munitions, white phosphorous bombs, rockets and missiles — some of which are sophisticated, others are home-made. Some of these weapons can be produced by the forces in combat since they are relatively unsophisticated, and those who make them are not concerned about their accuracy; all they care about is that they explode

somewhere near their supposed targets and cause the greatest damage possible.

But cluster munitions, phosphorous bombs and thermobaric explosives are not produced in the back of a garage or secretly hidden at night in a shed. These weapons are produced in a relatively limited number of fairly sophisticated factories, set up in the territory of an even smaller number of countries, probably all members of this Organization. By their very nature, and beyond their evil purpose or their manifest consistency with international humanitarian law, this type of weapon is generally reserved for conventional armed forces, which are subject to a chain of command and control by State institutions. Their production, stockpiling, supply, trade and export cannot take place without the knowledge and control of State entities.

Let us be clear — those States Members of the United Nations in whose territories such weapons are produced and from whose territories such weapons are supplied to conflict zones are equally responsible for their use against civilian populations, which are helpless victims trapped in a nightmarish hell. Sooner or later, all those responsible will be held to account — some perhaps in court, others will be judged by history, but all will have to answer to their consciences and ultimately to their Maker.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. We appreciate the positive efforts that the Secretariat and the Secretary-General himself have undertaken to move the Middle East peace process forward. China has also listened attentively to the statements of the representatives of Palestine and Israel.

War and conflict continue in the Middle East, which is deplorable. Efforts to find a solution should focus on resolving differences through dialogue and on eradicating instability through development so that the region can ultimately embark upon the path of peaceful and stable development. That is where the responsibilities of the United Nations and the Security Council lie.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. Defending the legitimate national interests and rights of the Palestinian people is the shared responsibility of the international community. At present, the Palestinian-Israel peace talks are deadlocked. The violent conflict has intensified. The humanitarian disaster is deepening. The two-State solution and the prospect of its achievement have been weakened. A comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian issue is in the interests of all sides. China proposes that the international community should take swift action in the following respects.

First, the international community needs to adhere to the path towards independent statehood, with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace. The establishment of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with full sovereignty, is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people. It is also the key to the solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question.

We should adhere to the principle that the peace talks are the only way out. The deadlock in those talks can only aggravate differences, incite hatred and drag Palestine and Israel into an endless, vicious and ever-escalating spiral of violence. Only with an early resumption of peace talks can there be peace and stability in Israel and Palestine and in the region as whole, which is in the fundamental interest of both Palestine and Israel. There is a need to adhere to the principle of land for peace, the two-State solution, the Arab peace initiative and the relevant United Nations resolutions, with a view to advancing the peace process. The afore-mentioned initiatives are significant outcomes of the excruciating negotiations on the part of the international community, and as such, are highly significant in guiding the Middle East peace process.

Secondly, both Israel and Palestine should stop engaging in violent conflict, and they should exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from taking any unilateral actions. In particular, they should altogether avoid using force against civilians. Israel should stop its expansion of settlement activities and demonstrate good will and meet the basic conditions for the resumption of peace talks. Israel must abide by international law and the basic norms governing international relations, lift its blockade against Palestine, especially Gaza, and rescind its restrictions on aid to Palestine. At the same time, Israel's legitimate security concerns must be respected and addressed.

Thirdly, the international community needs to jointly explore a broader scope of peace promotion, drawing lessons from the manner in which the situations in other Middle East hotspots have been resolved; explore broader efforts to promote peace on the basis of the Quartet's recommendations; and demonstrate the

will to promote peace through international synergy. Existing mechanisms can be maintained, and new initiatives need to be encouraged. At the same time, attention should be paid to giving free rein to the leadership role of the United Nations, and the outcome of efforts to promote peace should be approved by the Security Council. The international community should help relaunch Palestine-Israeli peace talks and establish follow-up mechanisms to provide robust support and ensure that the outcomes of peace talks are monitored and assessed.

In the process of peace talks, the international community should identify mechanisms to provide incentives in the light of actions taken by both sides. There is a need to further support Palestinian capacity-building. China has always remained supportive of the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national interests and rights. It has always been committed to promoting peace talks. Earlier this year, President Xi Jinping of China, when delivering a speech at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, called for a resumption of peace talks in the political arena and for reconstruction to be promoted in the economic arena.

China welcomes and supports all efforts conducive to easing Palestinian-Israeli tensions and achieving the two-State solution promptly. China has long supported Palestinian capacity-building by providing humanitarian assistance, training and aid for reconstruction. China is confident that, as long as the international community stays the course of promoting peace and as long as Palestine and Israel continue to choose the path of peace talks, peace will ultimately prevail. China stands ready to work with the international community in advancing a just resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli question at an early date.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela would like to begin by thanking Japan for having convened this open debate, and we welcome the participation therein of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who recently visited a number of countries in the Middle East region. That was part of his very firm commitment to seeking peace and stability. Our country endorses the statement to be delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This open debate on the Middle East is occurring at a very complex time on the international stage. Despite the existing difficulties, the international community, international and regional organizations, and countries in the region are carrying out efforts to achieve peace on the various war fronts. Nevertheless, we believe that one of the fundamental elements needed to achieve peace in the region is the resumption of peace talks between Israel and Palestine. Those talks, which have been stagnant for many years, constitute an ongoing source of conflict in the region. To that end, with regard to Palestine, we welcome the efforts made by France, which resulted in the holding of an international conference on the Middle East in early June. Similarly, we take note of the recently released report of the Middle East Quartet.

We had hoped for much more from that report. Most of all, we had hoped for a more balanced report that would have adequately described the disproportionate Israeli violence against the Palestinian people and that would have characterized the Israeli occupation as the root cause of all the violence and conflict. We believe that, had the Quartet report taken a clearer and firmer stance, that stance could have persuaded the parties of the need to resume dialogue and negotiations in order to put an end to a conflict that has affected regional stability for decades.

Unfortunately, we must recognize that, in spite of the good intentions of the Quartet and all of the diplomatic initiatives taken to create conditions for dialogue and peace, we continue to face a key obstacle, namely, the Israeli Government's refusal to put an end to its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and its criminal blockade on the Gaza Strip. That and that alone constitutes the main source of disruption in Palestinian-Israeli relations. Guided by the most extremist elements in its society, the Israeli Government is acting in an aggressive and arrogant manner. It refuses to participate in bilateral dialogue, because it knows that it has a powerful and disproportionately large military capacity and the support of prominent Security Council members.

At previous Security Council meetings, we have clearly stated our concern at the continually deteriorating living conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli occupation. The occupying Power's impact on the Palestinian people is felt in every aspect of their lives. That includes the loss of the lives of at least 140 Palestinians since October 2015, deaths that occurred at the hands of the Israeli security forces. There are also military operations, clashes, demonstrations and

presumed or real attacks against Israeli citizens. We do, of course, condemn those attacks. We reject and repudiate the assassinations committed against the defenceless Palestinian people by the occupying forces, who are acting in a disproportionate manner and who, to date, have yet to be held accountable for their crimes and massive violations of the human rights of Palestinians and of international law.

We also recall that since October of last year, some 50 Palestinian minors have died at the hands of Israeli military and security forces. Not only have those confrontations been unequal, but in fact, many boys and girls have died while engaging in activities entirely unrelated to confrontation. Let us not forget that, to date, thousands of Palestinians — including more than 1,300 children — have been wounded since the last quarter of 2015 as a result of Israel's actions. It is outrageous that those actions have not been roundly condemned and that demands for the occupying Power to put an end to those abuses are not being made.

In addition to physical disappearances, Palestinians are also being detained and imprisoned. More than 6,000 Palestinians, 400 of them boys and girls, are currently detained and are serving sentences in Israeli prisons. Of the total number detained, some 700 are in what is known as administrative detention, an arbitrary means of oppressing Palestinians, in flagrant violation of their human rights.

The occupying Power is not content to simply physically oppress the Palestinians. It has also devoted efforts to negating any possibility for development in Palestine, making the two-State solution virtually impossible. The main instrument used by the occupying Power to obstruct a definitive resolution, as noted in the Quartet report, is the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine, recognized and denounced by the international community as illegal and as a serious obstacle to achieving a firm and lasting peace. Right now Israeli settlers hold some 60 per cent of the land in Area C, which has some of the most productive land and the principal natural resources.

More than half a million Israeli settlers are living illegally on Palestinian land, including 200,000 in East Jerusalem. They undoubtedly represent the lack of commitment by the Israeli counterpart to a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. The fact that the Government of Israel says that the Quartet report perpetuates the myth that Israeli construction in the West Bank is an obstacle to peace only confirms that Government's obsession to block any possibility of a just and lasting solution that will guarantee peace and security for both peoples and for the region. Israel continues to act, in violation of international law and resolutions of this Council, in a brutal and systematic process of colonization of Palestine.

Israel's settlement policy in occupied Palestine has also brought other harmful consequences, like the violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian communities surrounding settlements. The settlers in the West Bank have harassed, humiliated and violently attacked Palestinian communities through vandalism and criminal acts and destruction of Palestinian property and have done so with total impunity, without being punished by the Israeli authorities. On the contrary, the authorities act to support some of those excesses by the settlements.

To the defenceless position of the Palestinians we must add Israeli restrictions on the movement of goods and people to and from the occupied West Bank and the criminal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. That further complicates reconstruction and the normalization of life in that area. Similarly, it must be considered that Israel's activities to modify in its favour the geographic continuity of Palestine and its demographic composition are accompanied by actions to alter the cultural identity of regions that have historically been Palestinian. This includes a lack of respect for holy sites, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

This situation of suffocating and intolerable oppression of the Palestinians cannot be concealed or compared to other violent acts in the occupied territories. All that violence is the fault of Israel. It is the result of the occupation of Palestine — an illegal and criminal occupation that is constantly inciting and provoking violence, declining to respect international law and to seek a political solution that is based on the two-State solution.

In this context, we call upon the Security Council to emerge from its state of inaction with regard to the occupation of Palestine by Israel. Council members must urgently take up our commitment to this matter and take action as soon as possible to make an effective contribution to ending the conflict and to finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution. We cannot continue to hear in this meeting those grim accounts of violence and death in the occupied territories.

The Council must also consider measures to establish an international system of protection for the Palestinian population in the occupied territories, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and resolution 904 (1994). We also reiterate our call to the Council to assume its commitment to the Palestinians, to the United Nations and to the mandate granted it in the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. It must demand the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories — the cause of the conflict — while firmly commiting to support Palestine's incorporation as a full-fledged Member State of the United Nations.

With regard to the report of the Middle East Quartet, we thank its members for the report and for their efforts in considering the Palestinian question. Obviously, we share the concerns expressed in the report with regard to the two-State solution and how it is being compromised. We agree that we must reject unilateral actions by any of the parties that may affect the outcome of the negotiations. We reject extremist violence, terrorism and incitement to violence by Israelis or Palestinians. Nevertheless, we should point out that we had hoped that the document would be more comprehensive and would have taken a broad perspective on what is a serious conflict that is affecting the two-State solution.

In that context, we are concerned that the report dilutes and minimizes Israel's responsibility as the Power occupying Palestinian territory, attempting to assign to Palestine the same level of responsibility in the conflict, when the fact is that one cannot equate violent Palestinian actions — which we do condemn — with the disproportionate response of the Israeli authorities.

We all know of the efforts of the Palestinian authorities to prevent and condemn violence, restrict violent rhetoric and reduce tensions, strengthen its governance and develop their economy. Those actions appear as recommendations in the report, but none of them have ended the Israeli occupation. On the contrary, the aggressions of the occupying Power have increased with the passage of time. Israel cannot impose conditions, which we know are imposibile to meet in the current situation, for the resumption of the dialogue to find a political solution to the conflict.

The report and its recommendations suggest a course of action. In the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, we must promote the peace process towards a two-State solution, in which Israel and a free Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, live side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. That is the ideal way to achieve the goal of establishing an independent Palestinian State that will allow the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate and inalienable right to self-determination, and thereby put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to fully comply with its responsibilities in this regard. The men and women of Palestine, and all those in the world who yearn and struggle for peace with justice and dignity, can count on the tireless support of Venezuela, within the Security Council and outside it, for the Middle East to be a region of peace.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to remain very complex, spawning ever new tragedies. The incidents on the West Bank of the Jordan River and ceasefire violations around Gaza are a clear confirmation of that.

We consider very important the publication on 1 July of the Middle East Quartet's report on the situation of the Palestinian-Israel settlement, in accordance with the relevant decision of the ministerial meeting of the Quartet in Munich in February. The document, which reflects the desire of the international community to maintain the prospects for a two-State solution, gives a picture of the real situation on the ground and contains specific recommendations. The implementation of those recommendations could help push the peace process out of the present impasse and contribute to the resumption of a direct Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

We attach great importance to the positions set out in the report on the unacceptability of violence and incitement to violence by both sides, on putting an end to the Israel policy of settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and on the illegal seizure of territory to the detriment of the Palestinians living there. It is in that light that we should examine the decision, recently made public in Israel, to build an additional 800 housing units on occupied Palestinian territory.

We deem it important that the report clearly expresses the need to re-establish inter-Palestinian unity on the basis of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's

platform and the principles of the Quartet. We also deem important the confirmation in the report of the Arab Peace Initiative as a consensual basis on which to move forward to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The report does not shy away from the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza, which contributes to instability and, ultimately, complicates efforts to achieve a negotiated solution. It also underscores the need to unite Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian Administration. Moscow welcomes the initiative by the President of Egypt, Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, to offer assistance in achieving peace between Palestinians and Israelis. We believe that the efforts of Cairo in that context could produce results. Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council and an active participant in the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, will continue with its efforts to find a just solution to the Palestinian question through the creation of an independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and coexisting peacefully side-by-side with Israel.

The most important priority of the international community is to resolve the conflict in Syria by having the parties reach a mutually acceptable understanding as the outcome of broadly representative negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. In the framework of the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group, a solid basis for a solution has been developed that has already brought about concrete positive results, including on the ground. The direct interaction by the Chairs of the International Syria Support Group has been very useful. The final word now belongs the Syrians themselves. However, much will depend on whether the opponents of Damascus will set aside their destructive stance, which postpones any peaceful solution. In that connection, we expect a more dynamic and, most important, a more positive attitude from our American partners as well as from influential regional players. The United States, as a co-Chair of the International Syria Support Group must, once and for all, set aside all propaganda and learn to objectively assess the situation. We call on the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to step up efforts to work with the parties to the conflict. The negotiating process in Geneva must be resumed as quickly as possible.

We intend to continue offering support to the Government of Syria in its efforts to combat terrorist groups led by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Al-Nusra Front. There can be no doubt that in this fight there should be no delays or incentives. We expect and hope that discussions are being held in various capitals, including regional capitals, in countries that are in a position to make a contribution to weakening the terrorist threat. For the time being, there are significant gaps that allow terrorists to cross borders and acquire money, weapons, materiel, resources and access to military-grade toxic substances. This must be stopped.

A very serious destabilization of the region is due to the conflict in Yemen. We are in favour of resuming the intra-Yemeni negotiations, under the mediation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Yemen, in Kuwait on 15 July, as the Yemenis themselves have called for. We believe that compliance with the ceasefire regime by all the parties to the conflict is essential to promoting further dialogue. In that connection, we call on all the parties to refrain from aggressive rhetoric that could undermine the very fragile mutual trust that has been achieved among the Yemeni people.

Libya is still in a very serious situation. It has not yet recovered from the foreign intervention that undermined State control. The fight for influence among various forces has had a negative effect and the efforts to restore Libyan unity on the basis of the political agreement concluded in Skhirat are moving forward very slowly. Of course, the Government of National Accord will need to be confirmed by the House of Representatives in Tobruk. That is a step that needs to be taken.

Dealing with the continuing negative trends in the Middle East region requires collective efforts by the entire international community. If we are to help the Libyans, we need to facilitate genuine reconciliation among them, and not cling to artificial schemes of dubious utility. Russia is ready to work in this area, both in combating terrorism as well as in promoting political means to resolving existing conflicts in the region.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is extremely difficult to think of any arguments that are compatible with the conscience of humankind when we look at the failure of the international community to deal with the Palestinian-israeli conflict. We cannot remain silent when the Palestinian people are not enjoying the freedom they deserve and their rights are

being systematically violated. We have seen the effects on the ground and we have seen the loss of life as a result of the attacks that have occurred, which are a violation of human rights.

We have reviewed the recently released Quartet report and we believe that silence is unacceptable. But we also agree that it is extremely important for us to think about new approaches, new ways by which we can revive the peace process and resolve the question of Palestine.

The Palestinian people are suffering on a daily basis. They have done so for more than 50 years now, and that is unacceptable. There is no ethical argument that can be put forward in support of the present situation. It runs counter to human logic and international laws and customs. There is very little hope left for the Palestinian people.

The roots of the crisis affecting the Palestinian people need to be recognized. The illegal occupation must be recognized, and the international community must make efforts to focus on the root causes of the situation. We also need to focus on the consequences of decades of occupation. The two-State solution, which has been accepted by the Palestinians and the Israelis alike and supported by the international community, has fallen victim to the current situation. There have been a number of factors that have hindered the two-State solution. We would like to reiterate that it is a very serious error to confuse or conflate the actual causes of the conflict and to draw equivalencies between the actions of the Palestinians and the actions of the Israelis. The Palestinians have an inalienable right to their freedom and they want to be able to have hope in their daily lives.

I will not dwell on the effects of the occupation. We are all well aware of those effects. I also will not dwell on the determination of the occupying Power to continue to engage in its settlement policy and to occupy Palestinian lands. I am not going to dwell on references to the new generations of Palestinians, who have ever only known life behind segregation and who live in isolation under the blockade in the Gaza Strip. I will not dwell on the lack of respect for holy sites and their inviolability.

I would like to talk about the scope for hope and justice for the Palestinian people. Of course, there have been attempts made by some to blame the Palestinian people for the occupation, for which they are not responsible. Palestinians are suffering from the systematic impact of the occupation and the blockade. We have seen Israel's systematic policy of settling Palestinian lands and of separating the West Bank and Gaza Strip, both geographically and politically. That has only strengthened the extremists in their actions.

The Palestinian Authority has been unable to control the situation. They recognize that the occupying Power has a consistent policy that goes against the two-State solution and the principles of peace. Allow me to highlight what the Secretary-General has said in this very Chamber:

(*spoke in English*)

> "as oppressed peoples have demonstrated throughout the ages, it is human nature to react to occupation, which often serves as a potent incubator of hate and extremism." (*S/PV.7610, p. 2*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Today we are at a very critical juncture in the Middle East. International efforts are necessary to resolve the question of Palestine. Today, we have an opportunity to again address that key issue in the region. We cannot squander this opportunity. We must make real progress. In that context, the Egyptian Government has issued a call for a just and comprehensive peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

I recall that there a firm and lasting peace has been established between Egypt and Israel. I would also point out that it is possible for the Israelis and Palestinians to achieve the same type of peace. We want to see an independent Palestine emerge in accordance with existing international resolutions, and we believe that the Palestinians and the Israelis should be guaranteed the right to live in peace.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt therefore recently made two visits, to Israel and to Palestine. Egypt is striving to listen to and learn the viewpoints of both sides in order to enable the parties to resume negotiations. It is our hope that those efforts will be successful. We believe that the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has raged for many decades now, would have a very positive impact on the Middle East region.

Furthermore, I would like to reaffirm that the situation remains fragile. We have an opportunity here that must be seized in order to establish peace between

Israel and Palestine, and ending the occupation of the Palestinian territories would be key in that endeavour. I also believe that the crisis affecting our Syrian brothers and sisters must be resolved.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this morning's debate, especially following the recent publication of the Quartet report. As we meet today to deliberate on the issue of Israel, Palestine and the Middle East, the international community is increasingly losing faith in its commitment to the two-State solution. We therefore thank the Secretary-General for his frank briefing to the Council, following his very fruitful visit to the region, especially to Palestine.

We are constantly seized with reports of Israel demolishing Palestinian homes and advancing plans to build new houses for Israeli settlers, conducting daily military raids on Palestinian areas, arrests and detentions, and imposing severe restrictions, among others, on human rights. The recent decision of Israel to move forward with new construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a clear demonstration of its disregard for the Council's decisions. We call on the Israeli authorities to reconsider the long-term implications of that strategy in the interests of peace and of a just final status agreement with the Palestinians.

While firmly condemning terrorist acts and attacks against Israeli citizens, we are of the view that the basic motivation for such acts results from the protracted occupation and the ensuing policies applied in the Palestinian territories, from which derives the main issue of Israel's security. The moving narratives that we heard this morning from the representatives of Palestine and of Israel should encourage the Council to move away from the business-as-usual treatment and approach to the question. The cost of that is too high.

In a revealing opinion piece published on 3 July by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, he mentions that:

> "[t]he Quartet report sounds an alarm bell that we are on a dangerous slope towards a one-State reality that is incompatible with the national aspirations of both peoples".

In the search for a solution to the dangerous and painful conflict, after the failure of multiple attempts by the international community to broker direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, it is clear that a simple adoption of a Security Council resolution will not be realistic at the present time or have any real influence on the peoples facing this grim reality on a daily basis.

In our view, we should push for the practical steps that both sides need to take to de-escalate tensions and start the slow process of rebuilding trust, which is essential to an eventual return to direct negotiations. In that regard, Angola welcomes the recent visit by the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs to Israel to re-engage with that country. We also continue to look forward to the conference that is being organized in Paris precisely to re-engage the international community, it is hoped, on a different path towards the implementation of the vision that we very much would like to see implemented, namely, the two-State solution.

No party can decide for the Israelis or the Palestinians what compromises to make and what risks to take for peace, and none of us can convince them to trust each other. However, the international community must be coherent and avoid continuing to take decisions that systematically allow for the violation of obligations by the parties, especially Israel. The support and incentives provided by international and regional stakeholders must be aimed not at perpetuating the status quo, but rather at providing incentives leading to the implementation of the mutual commitments already made, as well as, among others, resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

If the political leaders on both sides are skeptical about the two-State solution and the possibility of that outcome being implemented any time soon, with a view to de-escalating tensions in that extremely volatile region, we call upon the Israelis and the Palestinians to begin applying confidence-building recommendations in the expectation that they will lead to negotiations for resolving all permanent status issues and meet the Palestinian aspirations to statehood and Israeli security needs.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today.

I want to begin by welcoming the Quartet's report on the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. I join others in thanking the Quartet Envoys and principals for all their hard work in producing

that important analysis on the situation facing ordinary Israelis and Palestinians. The trends that the report highlights are, sadly, familiar: settlements, annexations and demolitions, violence, incitement and suffering — on both sides. If we cannot reverse those shocking trends, the report is clear what the future holds. It is "a future of a one-State reality, of perpetual occupation and conflict" — and thus a future without security, a future without Statehood. And that is no future at all. I know there are disagreements about some aspects of the report, what it does and what it does not cover. But I hope that we can all acknowledge that, whatever our disagreements, it is absolutely clear that progress must now be made to stop this possible reality from coming to pass and that we must advance, indeed save, the two-State solution. There are three messages that I hope we can all agree on today.

The first is that the violence must stop. Leaders on both sides must do more to clamp down on inflammatory rhetoric and incitement. It is simply not acceptable to stand by while this continues. Sadlly, the violence that we have seen over recent months continues. Even as the report was being published, violence was claiming more innocent victims. As we have heard, last week it was 13-year-old Hallel Jaffa-Ariel, last month Mahmoud Rafad Badran. It is almost unspeakable that future generations of Israelis and Palestinians are now victims of a conflict and occupation that belongs firmly in the past. Children like Hallel and Mahmoud should be looking ahead to seven decades of peace and hope, not falling victim to seven decades of hate and fear. This violence is only moving us away from peace, not towards it.

Secondly, we need to send a clear message today that it is not enough just to stop the violence. The shocking trends in the West Bank are unacceptable and must stop. Systematic settlement expansion deep into the West Bank, the legalization of outposts, the re-designation of land as Israeli State land and the obstruction or outright denial of Palestinian development in the West Bank — those policies are steadily eroding the viability of the two-State solution, something that the report clearly spells out. When a family in the Old City of Jerusalem is threatened with eviction from their home of over 60 years, you are not only eroding their past, you are eroding their future. You are eroding their faith that they will ever live on a land of their own and that they will ever coexist peaceably with Israel. In turn, you are fuelling an anger that will only threaten the right of ordinary Israelis to live in safety and security. The village of Khirbat Tana, a community near Nablus, has faced three waves of demolitions this year. Houses, barns and a school — the only school — were demolished. What hope is there for the two-State solution when communities are simply removed from the map?

My third message concerns the situation in Gaza. Two years after the latest conflict, ordinary Gazans continue to live in the direst conditions. This must be addressed if we are to prevent a resumption of full-scale conflict. We therefore call on Hamas and other militant groups to commit to ending rocket fire and other attacks against Israel. Israel's citizens deserve to live in peace. In turn, we need to be clear that Israel must lift restrictions in order to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians and allow the Gazan economy to grow. Finally, let us be clear that Palestinian leaders must work together to overcome their differences and reunify Gaza and the West Bank.

Those messages have been given too many times before in the Chamber, and I appreciate that some are disappointed that the Quartet report is not clear about the exact steps that need to be taken — steps that go well beyond words from the Security Council. Sadly, we are not in a position where there is an obvious path back to meaningful negotiations. But we can, and we must, use the report to underline the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for change. It is now up to the parties to take action. We stand ready to support them, but they need to show bold leadership if they are to make progress towards peace. It is long overdue.

Turning briefly to Syria, we are deeply alarmed by the credible reports that regime forces have begun an advance into Daraya, a town that Jan Egeland and the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria have confirmed has no significant presence of Da'esh or Al-Nusra front elements. That is not only a breach of the cessation of hostilities, it clearly undermines the regime's own declarations of a period of calm. As we all know, Daraya has been besieged by the regime for years, receiving much-needed aid convoys earlier this year, only then to be subjected to further bombardment by the regime. Such punishment attacks following aid deliveries are utterly sickening. At the same time, the regime has effectively cut the last supply route into east Aleppo City. The encirclement of the city threatens the lives of 300,000 people, potentially increasing the number of besieged people in Syria to over 800,000. We have

already seen the intensity in the Aleppo countryside, causing many thousands to flee to the Jordanian border and increasing the pressure on stretched resources there. We therefore repeat our call once again for those States that have influence with the Syrian regime to ensure an immediate halt to those offensives and to respect the cessation of hostilities in place. Those attacks are unconscionable and without justification.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Today's meeting provides an excellent opportunity for the United Nations membership to pronounce itself on the recently released Quartet report. While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, let me provide my delegation's views on the report and on other Middle East-related issues.

Despite the fact that the report obviously did not meet the expectations of all sides, we consider it as an important step that serves the overall purpose of reconfirming that the international community has not abandoned this long-lasting conflict and has not given up hope of achieving a final solution. Yet what we see now affords no room for optimism. The lack of direct dialogue and a snail-paced political process create an extremely unpredictable and explosive situation. The negative trend on the ground puts at risk the prospects for peace and a two-State solution. In that regard the scores are even, as both sides have contributed to the current state of affairs and the diminishing prospects for peace.

While the international community is trying to find a way out of the current deadlock, the parties to the conflict should show their strong will to find common ground about the prospects for their future coexistence. The two sides, together with the international community, must to make genuine efforts to reach a lasting peace. Ukraine calls on political leaders on all sides to work together and to take visible actions to de-escalate the situation and to restart direct dialogue. Ukraine reiterates its position that any workable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement should be guided by, and based on, the relevant provisions of respective Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Road Map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. There is no doubt in our mind that a compromise resolution to the conflict is possible only on the basis of the peaceful coexistence of two States, ending the violence and halting settlement activity.

The recently published Quartet report sounds an alarm bell that we are on a very dangerous track towards a one-State reality. This long-lasting conflict is a complex issue, which makes any expectation of a quick fix unrealistic. Nevertheless, we should continue to make every possible effort towards a peaceful settlement through a negotiated two-State solution that brings about reconciliation in the region. Ukraine welcomes any international effort aimed at bringing new dynamics to the Middle East settlement and seeking opportunities for the resumption of negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

We should not lose track of other conflicts that continue to inflame the region. The Syrian crisis is probably the gravest regional and one of the biggest global challenges the world is facing right now. Ukraine stands for an immediate end to the bloodshed and resumption of the negotiations to resolve the conflict. We believe that sustainable peace in Syria will be possible only after an internationally recognized political transition based on the principles of Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex).

We are convinced that the only way out of the current impasse is a result-oriented discussion on the establishment of a credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governing transitional body, followed by a new constitution and elections. However, it appears that the willingness of the Syrian Government to engage in such genuine discussions is lacking now, which makes prospects for the start of the transitional period in Syria on 1 August as remote as they were in December 2015, when the resolution 2254 (2015) was adopted.

We are particularly concerned that with the direct assistance of its regional and international allies, the regime seems to believe more and more in the prospect of military victory over its opponents. Unless there are major changes in the behaviour of the Syrian authorities and their allies, there is a solid risk of the Syrian conflict further deepening and bringing even more havoc to the entire region.

We remain convinced of the urgent need to put an end to violence in Yemen. Therefore, we express our consistent and unwavering support for the intra-Yemeni peace talks hosted by Kuwait. While recognizing the progress made by the parties towards a common understanding of the road map to a peaceful solution, we are rather dismayed by the fact that the parties have not yet reached an agreement. Nevertheless,

the absence of a final agreement so far should not be interpreted by the parties as a pretext for attempts to change the front line. The ceasefire must be upheld and strengthened. We therefore call on the parties to resume direct talks without preconditions on 15 July, as specified in the statement of commitment, and to conduct these negotiations in the most flexible and constructive manner that would enable them to swiftly reach a final and comprehensive agreement.

Present-day terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda have outgrown their regional dimension and now pose a global threat that challenges international peace and security. Ukraine stands united with the international community in its determination to eradicate such terrorist organizations and remove any fertile ground for terrorism in the region. We are encouraged by the substantial progress achieved by the Coalition against ISIL in Iraq and Syria in the past couple of months.

At the same time, we are concerned that despite some serious military setbacks, ISIL remains a serious threat to regional and global security. We are convinced that pending the conventional military defeat of ISIL, there is an urgent need to elaborate a day-after strategy, with regional actors playing a leading role to prevent a resurgence of ISIL clones. As we embark on this endeavour, we have to take into account the fact that a rapidly evolving threat of violent extremism surpasses the boundaries of any region. While we counter this threat by military means, the underlying root causes of the terrorism phenomenon cannot be ignored.

Without a clear way out of the multiple crises that are tearing the Middle East apart, and without closing the Pandora's box of deepening, region-wide sectarian confrontation, it would be impossible to contain the growing threat of violent extremism and international terror groups. We are convinced that it is in everybody's interest that these conflicts do not re-enact the fate of the whole Middle East peace process, which has been ongoing for decades. We simply cannot afford the terrible prospect of continuous fires all over the region setting the wider Middle East ablaze.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France has for several months noted a trend that, unfortunately, has been increasingly confirmed. The status quo does not exist. It is but an illusion cloaking a daily backslide that we cannot accept. Given the humanitarian consequences of the situation on Palestinian and Israeli civilians, we must recognize the harsh reality on the ground that, if nothing is done, the fragile prospects of the two-State solution will disappear and the risk of widespread conflagration will grow.

The Quartet report presented to the French presidency of the Security Council strengthened our assessment of the situation, based on two elements. The first is that the two-State solution is sorely threatened with disappearance. We must have the courage to say so. While there is enough blame for this to go around, the Quartet report unequivocally confirms that Israeli settlement is one of the main threats to the very sustainability of a future Palestinian State. Acts of violence, incitement to violence and terrorism also undermine the prospect of two States — a State of Israel and a Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security. Progress towards the inter-Palestinian reconciliation is indispensable.

The second element — a mirror of the first — is the need to take steps to preserve the feasibility of the two-State solution through specific action. It would seem indisputable that without the resolute action of the parties and the international community, this solution would give way to other scenarios that would in no way guarantee a just and lasting settlement of the conflict and would, on the contrary, threaten to precipitate armed clashes.

Faced with this relentless conclusion, our message in recent months has focused steadily on the need to recreate a political horizon to save the two-State solution. That is the only way to address the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to independence and security. The ministerial meeting held in Paris on 3 June marked the first stage of an international mobilization to save the two-State solution. That important meeting gave rise to three complementary advances.

The first is political mobilization in favour of the peace process. For the first time since the Annapolis conference in 2007, an international meeting was held on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That first meeting brought together 29 partners committed to peace. While the peace process has been partially overshadowed by the serious crises in the Middle East, our first goal was to put the conflict at the heart of our collective priorities. The Paris meeting contributed significantly to that end.

The second advance was the collective reaffirmation of support for the two-State solution. In a context in

which the situation continues to deteriorate, our wish was to reiterate that this solution is the only possible outcome to the conflict and to thereby re-establish political prospects capable of halting and reversing the downward spiral that we have seen on the ground. The conclusions arising from the Paris meeting are especially clear on that point.

The third advance obtained in Paris is the promotion of an international commitment to the relaunch and completion of dialogue between the parties. Everyone knows that only the Israelis and Palestinians will be able to make peace, but it is also necessary to recognize that conditions are not ripe today for a resumption of direct negotiations. Our initiative therefore seeks to build a consensus and promote a convergence of initiatives in order to recreate a climate conducive to successful dialogue.

The activities of France and of the Quartet are mutually complementary. Their common objective is to seek the resumption of credible negotiations conducive to reaching a final status solution. The report of the Quartet is an important contribution to the remobilization of the international community on behalf of the peace process. Bearing in mind the eminent role of the Quartet, France and all its partners will therefore pursue its efforts in a flexible and inclusive way. The Paris meeting is only the beginning of a process that still requires a lot of collective efforts in three areas.

We are going to begin by working on the preparation of a package of incentives that could be proposed to the parties in the event of a peace accord, during which time France will play a role of flexible coordination. That work will permit, we hope, the inclusion of several countries that were not present at the Paris meeting. Naturally, all contributions of goodwill will be welcome. Work in various directions has been proposed, in particular economic incentives, the strengthening of Palestinian institutions and links between Israeli and Palestinian civil societies.

That will, in turn, build on other ongoing efforts. In the first place, the implementation of the recommendations of the Quartet report will be essential in promoting rapid improvement on the ground. Moreover, following up on certain considerations in the Arab Peace Initiative, to which the 3 June communiqué assigns a central role, need to be pursued.

Finally, we will continue our dialogue with the parties to prepare the convening at the end of the year of an international conference with the parties.

France is, of course, aware of the difficulties posed by this conflict, one in which so many efforts and so much goodwill have failed. We consider, however, that it is our collective responsibility not to give up and never to quit the fight. Our ambition is realistic. We are not claiming to be the only ones able to succeed where others have stumbled. We are urging something in the nature of a coalition for of leveraging our experience and our affiliations with the parties and the region to bring into view a consensual method to construct a substantive agreement for the purpose of progressing in this way towards peace.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation is grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his presence and his briefing at this important meeting.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

My delegation also welcomes the Secretary-General's recent visit to the Middle East region, including to Gaza, which highlighted the unsustainable situation on the ground. Malaysia also welcomed the convening of an international interministerial conference on 3 June in Paris. We fully support the French initiative, which complements the efforts of the Middle East Quartet and seeks to galvanize international support to recreate the political horizon for a two-State solution. We look forward to follow-up actions that advance the prospects for peace, including the identification of meaningful incentives to the parties and the holding of another international conference later this year involving the parties in conflict.

My delegations acknowledges the efforts of the members of the Middle East Quartet in coming up with its first-ever report earlier this month. The report was timely, given the deteriorating situation on the ground, which, if left unchecked, might soon render a two-State solution unattainable. Like everyone else, Malaysia had high expectations for the report. The least we expected of the report was for it to be based on the principles and values of the United Nations, the rule of law and relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we regret the fact that the report completely sidesteps the question of the illegality of the Israeli settlements,

despite comprehensive discussion of the issue of the settlements in the report. The Quartet report describes only the outposts as illegal, and not the settlements, which reflects the erroneous positions of the occupier on the matter. Subscribing to that position would undoubtedly tarnish the integrity and impartiality of the Quartet. It is indisputable that the settlements are illegal under international law and therefore not a matter of negotiations. That has been clearly laid out in the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the Council's own resolutions and the 2004 decisions of the International Court of Justice.

We must not stay silent on the crucial issue of the settlements, as the settlements constitute the main threat to the viability of the two-State solution and the main source of frustration, anger and despair that feeds the continuous cycle of violence. It is foolhardy not to express that truth. Just days after the publication of the report, the Israeli authorities announced new settlement expansions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the additional financing of nearly $13 million for Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Indeed, by being silent on the illegality of the settlements in such an important document, we end up shielding and perpetuating illegal actions that erode the two-State solution.

In trying to identify threats to the two-State solution, the Quartet report focused on the symptoms rather than the root causes of the conflict. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said earlier this year that "it is human nature [for oppressed people] to react to occupation" (*S/PV.7610, p. 2*). And, as the representative of Egypt, echoing the Secretary-General, also said, that "often serves as a potent incubator of hate and extremism". However, conspicuously missing and glaringly absent from the report's recommendations was the need to end half a century of brutal, repressive, discriminatory and racist military occupation by Israel.

While we categorically do not condone any acts of violence and terrorism, regardless of the perpetrators and victims, we need to address the factors that trigger the widespread anger, frustration and despair in the first place. Burying our heads in the sand and pretending that the violence exists in a vacuum defies sound logic and common sense. Until the root causes are addressed, we will be stretching our imagination rather too far if we expect the Palestinians to stop resisting the occupier.

There are those who expect the Palestinians to engage in solely peaceful resistance to the repressive occupation, but in order to successfully engage in peaceful resistance, there need to be legal and legitimate avenues and platforms to channel their resistance away from violence. Such a platform would take the form of an impartial judicial system, to which the Palestinians could turn to when their homes are illegally demolished, their lands seized or their family members killed extrajudicially. It may also consist of a political platform for meaningful negotiations to resolve the final status issues or for the exercise of their democratic rights, or a multilateral platform to provide protection from gross violations of human rights. Sadly, they have no recourse to justice. The stark reality is that, when the Palestinians go to the Israeli courts to seek legal regress, such as for violence perpetuated by Israeli forces or settlers against them and their property, 94 per cent of the cases are simply closed without prosecution. When civil society and the media have tried to highlight gross violations of human rights perpetuated against the Palestinians, they have been arrested, intimidated, defamed or shot down.

When Palestinians engage in peaceful demonstrations against the illegal policies of the occupier, they, even children, have been shot at and killed by the Israeli forces. At the international level, when the Palestinians try to seek accountability and justice in regard to war crimes and crimes against humanity by turning to the International Criminal Court, many try to block them and criticize their attempts as unilateral measures. A similar rebuff occurred when the Palestinians have turned to the United Nations to seek protection, even if the effort is completely in line with international law. Needless to say, any attempts to bring their legitimate grievances to the Security Council would be vetoed. Furthermore, when the Palestinians seek peace through the comprehensive Arab Peace Initiative, they found no genuine partner on the other side seeking to bring about a two-State solution and no honest broker with a moral standing to take an objective position and pressure both sides to reach an agreement. Even the French diplomatic initiative has been rejected outright by the occupier.

Such are the contextual realities for the occupied Palestinians that have been fomenting anger and despair. Unfortunately, they have found no one who could make a difference to bear witness to their suffering and relieve them from the dehumanizing acts

that they are being forced to endure. Yet, ironically, we demand of the Palestinians that they cease violence, while at the same time we keep closing all doors to legal and legitimate avenues to enable them to achieve their legitimate aspirations through peaceful means.

The tragic circumstances of the Palestinian people are nothing new. This Chamber has laboriously debated it for decades. It is time for a change. The conflicting parties need to take affirmative steps to reverse the threats to the two-State solution identified in the report. The role of the Security Council is crucial in overseeing the implementation of the affirmative measures and in creating the conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations.

Under the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. Therefore, while the Council has endorsed the Middle East Quartet's mediation of the peace process, that does not mean that the Council has abrogated its responsibility with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Instead, the Council should use the various tools at its disposal to strongly support the Quartet's efforts to vigorously influence the parties' behaviour and to salvage the two-State solution. Malaysia stands ready to engage constructively with other Council members in responding to the Secretary-General's message that surely they deserve a horizon of hope.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to thank the Japanese presidency of the Council for having organized this open debate, which gives us the opportunity to examine the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, following the publication of the Quartet report. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his important briefing.

The situation in Palestine remains tragic, characterized by the seizure of lands, the demolition of homes and rampant settlement expansion. These actions fuel hatred and extremism within both Israel and Palestine and, as a result, have fostered the escalation of violence and insecurity. The unacceptable blockade of Gaza and the arbitrary detention of many Palestinians, not to mention the strategies for the geographic, demographic and cultural modification of Jerusalem, only exacerbate the conflict, which has lasted for decades.

Unfortunately, to further tarnish this scenario, since October, over 200 Palestinian victims, including many children, and 30 Israelis, have been recorded owing to the violence. Such a situation should further push the Security Council to act so that, with the support of the Quartet, it can fulfil its obligations to the Palestinian people, who, like the Israeli people, have the right to an independent State with secure and internationally recognized and guaranteed borders. In that spirit we commend the efforts of the Quartet members, which have led to the recent publication of the report. It is a consensus-based document with the goal of establishing bridges between Palestinians and Israelis by seeking, at this stage, to avoid outstanding difficult issues, as it happens, the political, legal, humanitarian and security aspects. We also endorsed the recommendations in the report that aim to achieve a two-State solution.

However, we regret what seems to be a trend of lumping Israelis and Palestinians together, because we think that Israel's occupation of the territories designated for the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State remains the main reason for the prolongation of the conflict. Nonetheless, we think that this document can contribute to the peace process on the condition that the strong recommendations are effectively and quickly implemented and because it calls for an in-depth correction of the current trends that seriously threaten a lasting peace, in particular an end to the settlement and related activities in the West Bank, including Jerusalem.

According to the report, since the 1994 Oslo Accords, more than 570,000 Israelis have settled in Area C, which was supposed to be a main part of the future independent and sovereign Palestinian State. From 2009 to 2014, more than 80,000 settlers moved to the West Bank, a situation that utterly calls into question Israel's commitment to a two-State solution. Evidence of this is the Israeli authorities' recent announcement, two days before the publication of the Quartet report, of the building of settlements in the West Bank. Administrative restrictions on construction permits that affect Palestinians in Area C have also been issued, which clearly demonstrates the fait accompli policy pursued by the Israeli Government.

Under these conditions, the destruction of Palestinian homes and structures, including those

belonging to Bedouins, as well as many physical and administrative restrictions, have killed the Palestinian economy and only exacerbate tensions. We urge Israel, as the occupying Power, in accordance with its reiterated commitments to a two-State solution, to put an end to the settlements and related activities in order to begin genuine negotiations for a lasting peace that meets the security needs of Israel and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign State, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Furthermore, my delegation echoes the Quartet's appeal to the Israeli Government to implement the previous agreements to transfer authority to the Palestinian Authority, in particular in Area C, in order to promote the awaited progress in the areas of housing, access to water, energy, communications, agriculture and natural resources.

While we reiterate our condemnation of hatred, violence and terrorism, regardless of who the perpetrators or what their motivations are, we recall the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who said that it is people's nature to confront occupation. Indeed, we believe that the lack of a political horizon favours the emergence of extremists on both sides — extremists whose acts of violence have targeted both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Administrative detentions, collective punishment, the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army and extrajudiciary killings, in addition to being violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, exacerbate Palestinians' feelings of humiliation about the past 50 years of occupation and stoke hatred and violence between the two populations.

The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza — a small enclave of 36 square kilometres that has been besieged for nine years and where more than 2 million people live, 70 per cent of whom require assistance — should call to our collective conscience. The prevailing extreme poverty, the high rate of unemployment and the lack of any prospect for development, in particular the collapse of businesses and Israeli restrictions on fisheries, are scourges likely to bring about the resurgence of serious conflict, which the report warns us about.

On this occasion, we repeat our encouragement for the ongoing discussions between the Palestinian political actors, namely, Fatah and Hamas, to achieve the formation of a Government of national unity, in the dynamic of the Cairo agreement. Furthermore, we reaffirm the central role of the countries of the region, and we renew our support for the Paris communiqué as a contribution to a definitive solution to the conflict, based on the previous processes such as the Madrid conference, the Oslo Accords, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, which, it should be recalled, recommends, beyond Palestine, a normalization in the relations between Israel and the States of the region.

In that regard, the idea of an expanded Quartet is certainly something that deserves serious consideration. As for the Security Council, we believe that it should play the role of guarantor of international peace and security by being more engaged in achieving a definitive solution to this decades-long conflict, which has generated only terrorism, extremism, and threats to the wider world beyond the region. Lastly, my delegation believes that it is up to the two parties and, in particular, up to Israel to comply with all previous commitments, including putting an end to the occupation and the construction of settlements, in order to promote the peace process.

Mr. Oyarzun Maechesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his statement and for his presence today. As the majority of speakers before me have done, I would like to focus my remarks on the Quartet report and on the road before us at this moment. Spain welcomes the publication of the report at long last for two simple reasons. First, the report states that the two-State solution will no longer be viable if the status quo is maintained. Secondly, the report calls for the urgent implementation of a series of recommendations by the parties. At the same time, it recognizes the role that is to be played by the international community.

Throughout today's open debate, we have heard various assessments of the report, and there will be more assessments to come during the course of the day. Nevertheless, there is an essential element that I think we can all agree upon, and that is the fact that the two-State solution is becoming ever more distant with every passing day. Political, territorial and socioeconomic concerns are leading to that distancing.

Spain rejects the use of violence and terrorism under any circumstances. Attacks and incitements to violence, as documented by the report, are unacceptable. Our primary responsibility is to avoid a situation in which there continue to be direct victims of the conflict. We

cannot allow for any more Mahmouds or Hallels. We simply owe them that. We must also realize that we are at risk of reaching the point of no return, at which we will forever lose hope for a just and lasting solution in the Middle East. I believe that no one wants to reach that point, hence the need for urgent measures. The utility of the Quartet report depends, to a great extent, on its ability to serve as a tool to revitalize the peace process. That is why we propose that we rebuild a viable political horizon in the region.

To that end, I would like to highlight the following next steps, namely, respect for international legal frameworks, international initiatives in support of a two-State solution and the role of the Security Council.

Respect for international legal frameworks, including United Nations resolutions, is very important; we have said so in previous debates but find it necessary to reaffirm it today in the light of the Quartet report. The construction of settlements in the occupied territories is illegal under international law and contravenes several Security Council resolutions. Israel must also stop the demolition of houses, the seizures of land and the designation of that land for exclusive Israeli use. By way of example, the Quartet report indicates that 60 per cent of Area C is currently held for exclusive use by Israel. The construction of settlements is not the only threat to the two-State solution, but it is the most difficult one to reverse.

As the report indicates — in one of the more positive statements that I have read in the report — we need to prevent a situation in which the two-State solution is no longer viable. Both parties to the conflict and the international community have the duty to call for compliance with existing international law and to work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East. That is why, in October of last year, Spain indicated that the international community should hold an international conference in order to enable us to revitalize the peace process from a broader perspective. We fully support the joint communiqué issued on 3 June. At the Paris conference, a number of possible guidelines that could contribute to preparations for such an international conference were discussed, including that of providing economic incentives for the parties in the context of a peace agreement, building the capacities of the future Palestinian State and working with both Palestinian and Israeli civil societies.

Our Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation indicated that Spain stands ready to host a meeting of religious leaders in the Holy Land. Its purpose would be to bring their leadership and influence to bear in order to send a message of tolerance, dialogue and non-incitement to violence between communities. We are, of course, ready to be actively involved in intra-Palestinian reconciliation and in the formation of a democratic Government of national unity under the auspices of the Quartet. The return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza is a key factor in overcoming the impasse. Finally, I would like to note that we agree with the Quartet report's reference to the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, which has the potential to establish a regional security framework.

Looking towards the future, we cannot forget the essential role that the Security Council could play at the opportune time in laying the foundation for the negotiation process. We want the Council's action to be firmly rooted in the international community, hence the need to advance along parallel tracks, in a coherent manner, in three directions, namely, by lending our support to the work of the Quartet, preparing the international peace conference and implementing the Arab Peace Initiative. The Security Council must pay particular attention to the implementation of the recommendations of the Quartet in the coming months. It is only in that manner that we will be able to gradually rebuild confidence on the ground and create conditions for the parties to reach an agreement.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Our remarks today will address only the Israeli-Palestine conflict. We will comment separately on other Middle East issues when the opportunity arises. Today's open debate is particularly important because it gives Council members and the wider United Nations membership the opportunity to reflect on the long-awaited report issued by the Middle East Quartet on 1 July. I want to begin by paying tribute to the clarity and gravity of the briefing provided by the Secretary-General. We endorse his assessment fully.

The Quartet report confirms what we all know, namely, that current trends on the ground pose a major threat to the continued viability of the two-State solution — a solution that would see a secure Israel and an independent Palestine living side by side in peace.

That is the vision that was called for long ago when the State of Israel was first established. It is one that

the Council has been working towards for many years. Unless and until it is achieved, it is unlikely we will ever have true peace in the region.

The Quartet report lays bare the reality that much of the West Bank has been appropriated by Israel. Seventy per cent of Area C, which constitutes 60 per cent of the West Bank, is either occupied by Israeli settlers or otherwise taken by the Israeli State. Meanwhile, Israel is systematically denying Palestinian development. To any dispassionate observer, the Quartet's conclusion that those developments are steadily eroding the viability of the two-state Solution is unanswerable. It also reflects what New Zealand and others have been saying in the Security Council for a long time. That is not to justify the violence and incitement, to which the report also rightly calls attention. Terror tactics and intimidation are reprehensible, whoever carries them out. Leaders on both sides have responsibilities in that regard.

We acknowledge the concerns that have been expressed about the report. Some have expressed disappointment that the recommendations do not go far enough. Both parties have accused the report of lacking balance. Certainly from New Zealand's perspective, the report does not go as far as it would have liked. But we nonetheless believe that it provides a useful analysis of the most significant threats to the peace process. It is especially noteworthy that four significant stakeholders — the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations — have put their names to the common diagnosis of the current situation.

The report also contains recommendations with which it is hard to disagree. It reinforces the need to address the wide range of critical issues facing Israelis and Palestinians, including halting settlement activity, strengthening the capacity and authority of the Palestinian Authority, addressing the situation in Gaza and reducing tensions and preventing violence and incitement. That must provide a useful basis for further discussion. But of course, no Quartet report on its own will change the realities on the ground. What is required is for the parties to demonstrate the political will to negotiate with each other and make the difficult compromises necessary to reach an agreement. We welcome all efforts to generate that political will and momentum. The Security Council has a fundamentally important role to play in that regard.

We were deeply disturbed by Israel's recent decision to advance plans for 800 new housing units in settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Such settlements are an affront to the Council and the Quartet, and take us further from peace. But they must not divert the Council from carrying out its responsibilities. We hope that the Council will be able to adopt a short and balanced statement in response to the Quartet's report. Such a statement must affirm the centrality of a two-State solution. But any Council statement, like the report, cannot be the end of our ambition. Like the report, any statement can only be a useful but necessary waypoint. It is not sufficient in itself to resolve the conflict.

The time is coming — indeed, many would say that it has long come — when the Security Council must live up to its responsibility and play its part to support the parties back to negotiations, including by providing guidance to the parties on the issues that must be resolved. As we have said, if the goal is to generate the political will to negotiate, we believe that it is important that the international community engage in a balanced way that reflects and addresses the real concerns of both parties, whether it is through the Security Council, the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative, an international conference or any other initiative.

We also pay tribute to the efforts that Egypt is carrying out, particularly highlighted by Minister Shoukry's recent visit to Israel. The proposal to host confidence-building talks between the two sides would be an important step to encouraging the parties and their domestic constituencies to move back to negotiations. New Zealand remains committed to Council action, at the right moment, aimed at making the promise of two States, Israel and a Palestinian State existing side-by-side in peace, a more realistic possibility.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Japan.

The Middle East is in turmoil, plagued by a whole series of challenges, such as terrorism, social unrest, political turmoil and prolonged conflicts that are causing the innumerable deaths of innocents and leading to millions of refugees and internally displaced persons throughout and beyond the region. The situation in the Middle East is undoubtedly a crucial issue that the international community must face up to, as the region's instability casts a shadow over the entire world, most notably by triggering and spreading violent

extremism. The menace of terrorism is greater than ever and crises in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are causing intolerable humanitarian situations. The work of the Security Council has never been as important as it is today.

Behind all that has been the weakening of — or, in some cases, the collapse of — governance in recent years. Most of the problems that the region now faces, including the conflicts and the spread of violent extremism, were initiated or exacerbated by the weakening of governance. Today many views have been and will be expressed as to what is to be blamed for the problems or what immediate actions need to be taken by certain parties. But I would like to focus my statement on what the international community should and can do today to deal with the failure of governance, which is key to solving the problem.

The restoration of governance and strengthening of social cohesion in the Middle East, whether in Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Libya, is vital to tackling the spread of violent extremism and improving the humanitarian situation. With regard to Syria, the Security Council bears a primary responsibility to facilitate a political transition to establish a credible, inclusive and non-sectarian Government as stated in resolution 2254 (2015). As for Iraq, we are witnessing the ongoing operation to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, but much remains to be done to stabilize the freed areas and achieve national reconciliation. The utmost efforts must be made to strengthen governance in the Middle East in order to prevent a cycle of violence and the growth of violent extremism. The Security Council must underline this point and encourage efforts to achieving that objective.

The key factors for a stable society in the Middle East, a region of remarkable diversity, are inclusiveness and coexistence. In that regard, the efforts towards national reconciliation, administrative reform and fiscal consolidation, such as the efforts pursued in Iraq, would be an important achievement for creating a form of governance and society sustained by inclusiveness and coexistence. Marginalization and exclusion are what we must strive to eradicate in order to realize inclusiveness and coexistence.

Two years ago, a Syrian man, Abu Sultan, and his family escaped from their country and managed to make their way to a refugee camp in Mafraq, Jordan, overcoming one hardship after another. For a man who had been a teacher for 25 years in Syria, it was disheartening to see how children at the camp were idling at the camp all day. In a situation where turmoil and uncertainty weighed heavily on people's minds, providing education for children was not necessarily a natural priority for parents. Mr. Abu Sultan, who managed to find a relatively stable foothold at the camp after he registered for the World Food Programme, supported by Japan, decided to give children education opportunities, starting with teaching them how to read and write. Education is a great equalizer. It helps children in conflict zones stand on common ground with those less affected by the conflict and helps alleviate the risk of marginalization. We must support people like Abu Sultan and potential partners like him to stand up and help others stand on their own.

Under the principle of "the best way is in the middle", which Prime Minister Abe announced, Japan is carrying out efforts to contributing to building a tolerant and stable society in the region. Our contribution reflects the guiding principles of inclusiveness and coexistence. We believe that such efforts should include three primary focal points. First, we must focus on assistance towards social stability and enhancing governance in the region. Secondly, we focus on humanitarian assistance, including supporting the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons and assistance for the social stability of the neighbouring host countries. In reality, this is sadly lacking.

Thirdly, we focus on developing human capital which would contribute to preventing the marginalization of people caused by unemployment or lack of education.

In concluding, I would like to stress that dialogue and trust-building are also critical for restoring order in the region. These include those between Israel and Palestine, and Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as cross-sectarian dialogue at every level of society. There have been efforts made in this regard. Unfortunately, more efforts need to be made. The international community must continue to deploy its utmost efforts in order make such dialogue possible. Japan is ready and willing to work to that end.

I would like to reiterate that, as a member of the Security Council, Japan will vigorously work towards the peace, stability and prosperity of the Middle East in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and the international community.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable speed so that interpretation may be provided accurately. I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Raúl Morales Moscoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Morales Moscoso (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his detailed briefing and the delegation of Japan for coordinating today's open debate in the framework of its presidency of the Security Council.

Guatemala aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We view with great concern the recent acts of violence and terrorism that have occurred in the past few weeks in the Middle East, including in Israel and Palestine, which is why we consider today's open debate as timely. We wish to take this opportunity to reject and vigorously condemn the attack on the shopping and amusement mall in Baghdad, reiterating our firm repudiation of all forms of terrorism. Guatemala expresses the deepest solidarity with the people and the Government of Iraq for these reprehensible attacks in which men, women and children were killed. Furthermore, we are concerned at the remark made by Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, that attacks on shrines have the objective of igniting sectarian tensions in the country. This could have devastating effects, with a return to the dark days of sectarian conflict in Iraq.

Guatemala rejects and strongly condemns the attack that occurred on 28 June at the Atatürk Airport, in Istanbul, in which numerous deaths and wounded were reported. We express the deepest solidarity with the people and the Government of Turkey for such a reprehensible attack aimed at civilians.

With respect to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, we welcome all efforts to achieve the keenly awaited peace in the country, in particular the efforts of the International Syria Support Group to hold meaningful negotiations with a view to finding a political solution to the conflict. Since March 2011, more than a quarter of a million Syrians have died, more than 1 million have been injured, and 4.8 million have been forced to leave the country, while 6.5 million have been internally displaced, making the Syrian situation the largest displacement crisis in the world.

In that regard, we share the concern expressed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with respect to the unfolding situation in Aleppo, in particular that of the approximately 300,000 people trapped in the eastern part of the city, as a result of heavy fighting along the Castello road, the only road in or out of that part of the city. Heavy fighting in recent days has continuously exposed civilians to the risk of death and injury and prevented humanitarian access to people in need of assistance. Air strikes, shelling and heavy fighting have caused many deaths and wounded as well as damage to schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. It has also hampered relief operations. All of the foregoing is in clear violation of human rights, international law and international humanitarian law.

On the issue of Israel and Palestine, Guatemala strongly condemns the murder of the 13-year-old girl stabbed to death in her home in the settlement of Kiryat Arba and the murder of a 48-year-old rabbi, shot by a Palestinian commando. These are deplorable events that should not recur. At the same time, Guatemala shares the Secretary-General's concern at the decision by the Israeli authorities to move forward with its plans to build in the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and in East Jerusalem. This affects the faith of the parties in negotiations and the vision of two States living side by side in peace and generating stability in the region.

The international community should not lose hope that an agreement between Israel and Palestine could be negotiated. For that to happen, however, the necessary political will is required. Accordingly, I would like to echo the words of the Secretary-General delivered at Tel Aviv University on 27 June. He said that

> "responsibility is more than taking ownership for one's actions — it is about seeing your actions

through the prism of other's concerns — and seeking to understand their needs as your own. This wisdom teaches us that we cannot be a world of 'us and them'. We must be a world of 'we the peoples' as the Charter of the United Nations describes".

All of us have a responsibility to build that future in harmony.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): Time and again, we have warned the Security Council of the dangers of the continued construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Over and above their flagrant violation of public international law, international humanitarian law and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, such activities have come to constitute the most serious obstacle to any negotiated political settlement. In fact, with his recent approval of the construction of 800 new housing units in the occupied territories, how could anyone take Mr. Netanyahu's statements that he is ready to negotiate a political settlement with the Palestinians more seriously than that of the man who pretends to negotiate over the sharing of a pizza while he keeps eating it?

With the ongoing acts of collective punishment, best illustrated by the systematic campaign of house demolitions in the West Bank, and the increasingly inflammatory and provocative rhetoric of Israeli officials, such as Mr. Naftali Bennett's call for the kidnapping of Palestinians, the situation on the ground remains very gloomy indeed. However, I welcome the meeting convened in Paris at France's initiative on 3 June and the joint communiqué which reaffirmed the need to end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and which highlighted the importance of the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative. We were encouraged by the mention in the communiqué of "the prospect of convening before the end of the year of an international conference", and would like to stress in that respect how critical to its success would be the participation of all directly concerned parties and their full engagement in the required preparatory works.

Allow me now to recall that on this very day of 12 July, 10 years ago, Israel launched a 33-day war against my country that according, to a Human Rights Watch report dated 5 September 2007, resulted in

> "at least 1,109 Lebanese deaths, the vast majority of whom were civilians, 4,399 injured, and an estimated 1 million displaced".

An important feature of this war was Israel's massive resort to one of the most vicious and disgusting weapons of all times — cluster bombs. The estimated number of cluster submunitions fired into my country during the 2006 war was between 3.2 to 4.6 million, according to another Human Rights Watch report of 16 February 2008, in which we also read:

> "Research in more than 40 towns and villages found that the IDF's use of cluster munitions was both indiscriminate and disproportionate, in violation of international humanitarian law, and in some locations possibly a war crime. In dozens of towns and villages, Israel used cluster munitions containing submunitions with known high-failure rates. These left behind homes, gardens, fields and public spaces — including a hospital — littered with hundreds of thousands and possibly up to 1 million unexploded submunitions. By their nature, these dangerous, volatile submunitions cannot distinguish between combatants and non-combatants foreseeably endangering civilians for months or years to come."

I would like to take this opportunity to also recall my Government's firm commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which helped put an end to the Israeli aggression, and to stress the need to move from the precarious situation of a cessation of hostilities to a permanent ceasefire. While Israel claims to abide by the terms of resolution 1701 (2006) — which first and foremost calls for respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity — over the past 10 years it has committed no fewer than 11,856 violations of my country's sovereignty — 8,561 by air, 1,024 by sea, and 2,274 by land. All these violations have been recorded and documented in tens of letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and issued as official documents of the United Nations. We reiterate today our call on the Security Council to strongly condemn all these violations and to compel Israel to put an immediate end to them.

Moreover, Israel continues its occupation of the northern part of Al-Ghajjar, in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and in a deliberate dismissal of the two initiatives launched by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in 2008 and 2010 to

ensure Israel's withdrawal from that area. We would also wish to reiterate on this occasion our readiness to work with the Secretary-General to close the chapter of the Shab'a Farms and Kfarshouba hills occupation by Israel and to recall that my Government welcomed the territorial definition of these farms as published in his report S/2007/641 of 2007 as a starting point to address this issue, while Israel has not yet responded to the Secretary-General on this matter.

In April, I informed the Security Council (see S/PV.7673 Resumption 1) that based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and on paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006), my Government sought the good offices of the Secretary-General in the matter of the delineation of the disputed maritime border and exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel. Considering the Secretary-General's reply, we now look forward to the role to be played in that respect by his Special Coordinator in Lebanon.

Finally, need I recall that during its 2006 war on Lebanon, in July Israel bombarded the Jiyyeh power plant, causing an unprecedented oil spill on Lebanese shores, with heavy environmental impact, especially on fisheries and biodiversity? This is why, for 10 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted, by an overwhelming majority of States from all regional and cross-regional groups, a resolution requesting Israel to offer prompt and adequate compensation to Lebanon for the damage related to the oil spill it caused. Let me clarify, in this regard, that the amount of $856 million adopted by the General Assembly, and which Israel has been requested to pay in compensation, is simply drawn from a report of the Secretary-General, which relied on independent studies, mainly conducted by the World Bank, to quantify the said damage.

I am sure that Council members will agree that it is almost impossible to maintain peace and security if States are not held responsible for their internationally wrongful acts. It is therefore our firm belief that it is now the responsibility of the Council, as the main organ entrusted under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain peace and security, to act without delay to ensure that Israel compensate Lebanon for the damage related to the oil spill it caused.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): It is a pleasure to participate in this debate, Mr. President, under your eminent leadership of the Security Council. We thank the Secretary-General for his frank and revealing briefing. It honestly portrays the grim picture of the vortex of violence that is the Middle East today. Conflict and chaos have been endemic in the enduring Arab-Israeli dispute. Palestine's suffering is epic. It is our conviction that enduring peace in the Middle East cannot be restored until there is a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. The basic prerequisite for a just solution is the creation of an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Unfortunately, that appears to be a more distant prospect than at any recent time.

The report of the Middle East Quartet reflects the fact that the most serious impediment to a solution is the continued illegal construction of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land. After the report was issued a week ago, Israel announced the building of 560 additional housing units in the West Bank settlement. Unless Israel's illegal settlements are halted and reversed, it will be impossible to create a Palestinian State that is contiguous or viable.

While creating those unilateral facts on the ground, the present Israeli Government has obfuscated on the revival of the peace process, posing conditions that no Palestinian leadership, no matter how accommodating, could be expected to accept. Meanwhile, the oppressive occupation of the Palestinians continues. Protests evoke brutal responses. Gaza remains a virtual prison. Conditions in the West Bank continue to become more chaotic and more violent. The international community cannot continue to shirk its responsibility to promote a just solution to the problem. The Security Council cannot continue to avoid its obligations under resolution 242 (1967) and its successors to enforce a just solution to the conflict, which is at the core of the challenges that confront the Middle East today.

Even as the world has failed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian problem, violence and war have spread to engulf all of the Middle East region and beyond. The violence and suffering of the Iraqi people began under a cruel dictatorship, escalated during external intervention and persists today in a grinding fight against terrorism and sectarian violence. Iraq's tragedy has been joined by that of the people of Syria, with hundreds of thousands killed in a brutal and complex war and millions displaced internally or externally as refugees in neighbouring countries, or flowing in

great masses, often with tragic consequences, to the ostensibly safe borders of Europe.

In both Iraq and Syria, ISIS has emerged as a principal adversary. The brutal brand of its ideology and reign of terror must be defeated. Welcome advances have been made on the ground in facing that monstrous movement. Pakistan supports the steps being pursued by the international community to roll back ISIS from its strongholds and restore peace over the large tracts of Syria and Iraq that it continues to occupy.

As it retreats on the battlefield, ISIS has shifted strategy to undertaking terrorist attacks on civilian and security targets within and outside the region. Pakistan condemns the brutal terrorist attacks that have killed so many innocent people in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. To defeat ISIS, it is essential first for the States bordering Syria and Iraq and the external Powers that have become involved in these conflicts to reconcile their own divergent objectives and priorities and evolve agreed measures to overcome the political, religious and ethnic divisions within those suffering countries. Only then will it be possible for all the concerned parties to concentrate their efforts to defeat ISIS and the threat it poses to regional and international peace and security.

We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and encourage his endeavour to secure a cessation of hostilities that would enable the easing of humanitarian suffering and the evolution of political structures for a transition to peace. The regional and major Powers have a heavy responsibility to evolve a viable and agreed plan to realize these objectives.

Yemen, too, has been in the throes of a war whose origins were internal but which has been exacerbated by the external armament and encouragement of certain groups. It has not been easy to restore legitimacy, reconciliation and peace in Yemen. It is terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida and ISIS, that have exploited the war to secure a more prominent presence in Yemen. The restoration of peace through political reconciliation and respect for international law is in the vital interest of the people of Yemen, all of its neighbours and the international community. My country supports all genuine efforts to this end.

The lesson of history — indeed, of recent history — is that protracted conflicts can be resolved. The recent example of Colombia is an inspiring case in point. What is needed is firm resolve, concerted action and, above all, strong political will to build lasting peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. AlJarallah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). I would like to express our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council this month. We wish you every success.

This meeting is taking place against the backdrop of a serious deterioration of the conditions of the Palestinians because of Israel's hostile and destructive practices and its systemic violations of international law in its dealings with them and their territory. It also coincides with the French initiative that we welcome very much. We support the French efforts aimed at establishing an international support group and holding an international peace conference that would involve all international parties, set a clear and credible path towards negotiations aimed at ending the conflict and arriving at a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

With regard to the report of the Middle East Quartet that was issued on 1 July, we find it unfair that the report equates the responsibilities of an occupied people with those of an occupying military Power. In addition, the language of the report, which is unbalanced and unfair, became a guise for the decision by Israel, two days later, to build hundreds of settlement units in different parts of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. That is new proof that we need to follow a more resolute path to end this conflict in the only way possible, namely, to end the occupation. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation reiterates in particular the obligations of the Council, as per the Charter of the United Nations and many of its resolutions requiring it to deal seriously and urgently with this prolonged tragedy.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to systemically kill and extrajudicially execute unarmed Palestinians in the occupied territories, as it has done for almost five decades. The number killed by soldiers of the occupying Power during the past few months has reached 216 Palestinian civilians, including 50 children, some of whom were newborns. In addition to State terrorism by the Israeli war machine, gangs of terrorist settlers continue to attack Palestinian civilians, including setting aflame Palestinians, their homes and their crops. That is very similar to what Da'esh is doing.

with the difference that this is happening in front of occupying Power and with its consent.

Those acts could all constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity that have no statute of limitations. No generation will forget such acts. Everyone who perpetrates such crimes must face international justice. In that context, the OIC reiterates its call to the Security Council to add the leaders of extremist Israeli factions, including gangs known as the Hilltop Youth movement and Make Them Pay, to the list of terrorists wanted by States and the international community.

We express our deep concern at Israel's continuing falsification of the historical record through its illegitimate confiscation of Palestinian land and the imposition of policies and measures that can be equated to ethnic cleaning against Palestinians, in addition to the continued attacks against praying congregations and sanctuaries — Christian and Muslim — particularly the Al-Aqsa mosque and a number of churches in Jerusalem. That has led to a disastrous and tragic situation that requires the Council to interfere to stop those attacks, which only feed into extremism and racism and create religious conflict in the Holy Land.

We reiterate that Israel must lift its siege of Gaza. We commend the statement by the Secretary-General during his visit to Palestinian land in June that the Israeli siege of Gaza must be lifted immediately.

Once again, I take this opportunity to reiterate the support of OIC for the Palestinian people in its pursuit of its inalienable rights, including its right of return and self-determination and to establish an independent State on Palestinian land that has been occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida:I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is an active member of the International Syria Support Group, and we are doing everything in our power to ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) and the provisions of the Geneva communiqué. A Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition in accordance with the documents I mentioned is needed to bring lasting peace to the country, defeat Da'esh and all terrorist organizations in Syria and enable Syrians to return to their homes in safe conditions and contribute to the reconstruction of their country.

Conditions need to be created urgently for serious direct talks to agree on a broad, inclusive, non-sectarian transitional governing body with full executive powers, as stated in the statement of the International Syria Support Group of 17 May. To that end, all parties to the conflict need to respect the cessation of hostilities, make progress on the issue of arbitrarily detained persons and work to ensure immediate, secure, sustainable and country-wide humanitarian access to all people in need. The level of humanitarian aid, including medical equipment and supplies, needs to be significantly enhanced to meet the needs of all vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities throughout Syrian territory.

Without real and significant improvements in the conditions necessary for serious negotiations, both the political process and the cessation of hostilities are at risk.

The European Union condemns all violations of international humanitarian law and attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, in particular against medical facilities, schools, markets and IDP camps. The EU strongly condemns excessive and disproportionate attacks committed by the Syrian regime against its own people, including the starvation of civilians through the besiegement of populated areas.

The EU reiterates its strong support for transitional justice and accountability for all serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including any that may constitute a war crime committed in Syria by any party, including Da'esh. The EU renews its call to the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. The EU welcomes the renewal of the mandate for the Commission of Inquiry and calls for the cooperation of all parties, in particular the Syrian regime to grant necessary access.

Serious negotiations are required to reach an agreement by 1 August on a political transition. Only a

real commitment on both sides of the political track can lead to an agreement.

The EU is stepping up its support to the Syrian opposition, and in particular the High Negotiations Committee, as the opposition delegation in the United Nations-brokered talks in Geneva. The EU encourages unity among opposition groups and welcomes the fact that the opposition has intensified its coordination and preparations for negotiating a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict.

The EU urges the Government delegation to finally lay out its plan for truly implementing a genuine political transition. Speeches such as that by Bashar Al-Assad of 7 June that reject the political process, reject the legitimacy of the opposition delegation and advocate a military solution seem calculated to undermine the Support Group process, and with it the best hope for peace in Syria.

There cannot be lasting peace in Syria under the present leadership, and until the legitimate grievances and aspirations of all components of Syrian society are addressed.

The EU is ready to increase its support even more to both the humanitarian work and the political negotiations, in full coordination with Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. We are ready to rapidly provide support to stabilization, reconstruction and the return of refugees and internally displaced people to their homes in safe conditions once a political transition has started.

The EU would like to pay tribute to the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Iraq.

The surge of terrorist activities that we have witnessed recently is a sign that Da'esh is losing ground on the military front. However, every attack that results in loss of life is a breeding ground for further sectarian tension, in a country and a region that require cohesion and unity in the face of a complex crisis.

The EU continues its firm support for Prime Minister Al Abadi's efforts to build an inclusive Government and for his programme of reforms. The EU commends Iraqi progress particularly regarding stabilization. Only a Government that can provide safety, services and opportunities for all its citizens will be able to build a strong, unified Iraq. The EU will continue to support the Iraqi Government in that endeavour.

As far as the Middle East peace process is concerned, we may have reached a critical juncture. It is time for international initiatives to become a coherent collective effort to revive the two-State solution. For the EU, as outlined in previous Council conclusions, there is no alternative to a negotiated two-State solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. It remains the only realistic way of ending the conflict once and for all. It offers the prospect of a secure State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition.

However, we are currently concerned that the two-State solution could be slipping beyond reach. That is why the European Union is united in its determination to work alongside international partners and the region to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process. That is the very reason that the Middle East Quartet, in its report published on 1 July, outlined the dangerous trends on the ground imperilling the two-State solution. The EU welcomes the publication of the Middle East Quartet's report. The EU endorses the recommendations outlined in the report as a contribution to creating the conditions for the two-State solution, and asks the Secretary-General to report on their implementation.

The EU expresses concern at the trends on the ground and calls on the parties to swiftly engage with the Quartet and other relevant stakeholders and implement the recommendations in full. Such implementation would demonstrate a genuine commitment to a peaceful solution by rebuilding mutual trust and creating the conditions for direct and meaningful negotiations that resolve all final status issues. The EU stands ready to support the parties in that process.

The EU welcomes also the joint communiqué on the Middle East peace initiative adopted at the ministerial meeting in Paris on 3 June. Inclusiveness is now needed in the follow-up to the Paris meeting and the Quartet report. Those major international initiatives must proceed hand-in-hand and in a well-coordinated and well-sequenced so that they constitute a coherent collective effort to rescue the two-State solution, while paving the way for direct talks.

The European Union also encourages discussion in the context of the Arab Peace Initiative, which holds out hope for a permanent regional settlement.

We are deeply concerned by the continuing cycle of violence. Violence costs human lives. It causes grief and resentment and exacerbates mistrust and mutual recrimination, thereby undermining prospects for a peaceful solution. While our thoughts are with the families of the victims, we urge the parties to work towards the de-escalation of tensions, to refrain from actions in the form of incitement and provocation that serve only to fuel further tension, and to observe international humanitarian law and adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force.

We also recall that only the re-establishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed. Israel's ongoing settlement policy, which is illegal under international law, and the actions it has taken in that context, such as evictions and forced transfers of populations, demolitions and confiscations, including demolitions of EU projects, constitute an obstacle to peace and threatens to make a two-State solution impossible.

Palestinian unity is essential for a viable Palestinian State. President Abbas must be fully behind efforts to achieve reconciliation, which is fundamental for progress towards a permanent resolution and key to improving the security of the Palestinians and Israelis. Militant activity and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza feed the general instability and impede efforts to achieve a negotiated solution.

We need bold leadership on the ground to reverse those trends. That requires an end to both settlement expansion and violence. The EU therefore regrets that Israel's response has been the approval of hundreds of additional settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territory. A fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, would significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinian leaders should consistently and clearly condemn specific terrorist attacks. We encourage the Palestinian leadership to show its opposition to the incitement to violence and clearly distance itself from such actions. In the interest of addressing the needs of the Palestinian population, the EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform, democracy and the rule of law. The EU calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change in the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

In conclusion, the EU will continue to work with its Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, along with the Quartet and other stakeholders, in the region and beyond, in order to make progress towards a just and lasting peace based on a two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, for presiding over the work of the Council during this month.

Year after year, the General Assembly has adopted scores of resolutions on the Palestinian question. Our international Organization has adopted dozens of pivotal resolutions, such as General Assembly resolution 194 (III) on the right of return of refugees to their homeland, as well as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 478 (1980). All of those resolutions reject the occupation in Palestine and confirm the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish their own State, the right to return and the right to sovereignty over its natural resources. All of those resolutions consider the Israeli decision to annex Jerusalem null and void, illegal and illegitimate, and confirm the illegality of colonization, condemn Israeli violations of human rights law and humanitarian international law and call for the cessation of those violations.

After the adoption of all those resolutions and nearly a half-century of occupation by Israel of Arab territories, we have the right to question the credibility of meetings such as today's, aimed at addressing the important Israeli-Palestinian dossier now that it has been transferred from the Security Council to the Middle East Quartet. We have the right to question the seriousness of certain powerful States that claim to seek a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian

question that is comprehensive and compatible with the aforementioned United Nations resolutions.

We would ask the following questions. When will the Palestinian people enjoy a life of dignity in their long hoped-for independent State? We have posed that question for the past 70 years, ever since the United Nations was established. When will our people in the occupied Syrian Golan be able to return to their homeland, Syria? When will the Israeli occupation of our lands in the Golan, which began in 1967, end? We have raised another question for the past 50 years: When will Israel withdraw from other occupied territories, in particular the Lebanese territories? And here is yet another question that we have raised for more than 10 years: Is it not time for all effective, powerful forces to find a useful formula to implement the resolutions dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict? These are questions that we would like the Governments that claim to cherish the precedence of international law and the credibility of the United Nations to answer.

I speak before the Council today as a party to the Middle East conflict, because parts of the Syrian territory are under Israeli occupation. In that context, Israel continues to ignore all relevant United Nations resolutions in regard to the Syrian Golan, particularly resolution 497 (1981), which declared Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan as null and void and lacking legal value. The occupation authorities pursue their systematic violations of human rights, settler activities and policies of oppression against Syrian nationals. Israel steals the natural resources of the Golan, including oil and water. The American firm Afek Oil and Gas has begun to explore for oil in the occupied Syrian Golan, close to the so-called nature settlement.

Moreover, the Israeli occupation authorities have confiscated thousands of dunums of land from the Golan to distribute among people who will be brought in to settle the confiscated lands with the purpose of establishing agricultural projects. Under this so-called farms project, the Israeli occupation forces have established 750 new farms in the occupied Syrian Golan. This year alone, 90 families have been brought in to settle those farms. Planning is under way to bring in another 150 families; so there will be a total of 750 families to settle those farms. All of those Israeli measures represent a blatant violation of international law, the Geneva Conventions and resolution 497 (1981). Such practices must be brought to an end immediately. They leave us with no other option than to resist that occupation through all the legal means guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations.

Furthermore, Israel continues to arrest many of the Syrians under occupation, including the Syrian Mandela, Mr. Sedqi Al-Maqet, who has been detained by Israel for over 27 years, which is the same amount of time that Nelson Mandela spent in prison under apartheid. Some might not know that Israel has detained Al-Maqet yet again because he worked to document and show, with sounds and images, Israeli support for Al-Nusra, which is linked to Al-Qaida, and the so-called Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which is part of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham. All of this, in addition to the meeting that was held by the Israeli Government in the Syrian Golan, was not enough to concern the Secretariat or the Department of Political Affairs, let alone the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

Syria confirms that the stability of the region and the credibility of the Organization require the United Nations and the Security Council to adopt measures to implement international resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981), by forcing the Israeli occupation to commit to putting an end to its aggressive and hostile practices and to withdrawing from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

Israel is not satisfied with practicing all the hostile policies which I referred to. It has started dealing with terrorists, including Al-Qaida-affiliated groups in the zone of separation, such as Al-Nusra Front. Israel provides support, including by treating their wounded in Israeli hospitals and covering their costs, which is also, according to reports by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, in violation of the Disengagement Agreement of 1974. It has exposed the members of the Force to danger and provided increased freedom of movement for terrorist groups in the separation zone. Terrorist groups have been able to kidnap some peacekeepers from the Philippines and Fiji more than once. Therefore, I stress once again the need to address this grave situation with the seriousness and importance that it deserves.

I will not respond to some of the improper comments made by some speakers with regard to my country, Syria, in particular those made by the

Permanent Representative of the United States and the observer of the European Union. Those comments seek to detract our attention from this agenda item, lure us into quixotic argument and tilt at windmills instead of working seriously to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine in a just and comprehensive manner.

The observer of the European Union seems to have forgotten that the item under discussion is primarily dedicated to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. It is not focused on the situation in Syria, which was precipitated by some European States involved in Syrian bloodshed by exporting European takfiri terrorism to my country, Syria. Some States used to refer to these types of terrorists as jihadis and moderate opposition members when they targeted my people in Syria.

However, when those terrorists started acting up in European capitals they became terrorists. This is well known. Mr. Laurent Fabius said as much at the 2012 Morocco summit at which participants claimed to be establishing an opposition entity. The same statement was repeated by the Foreign Minister at the time, who is now the Prime Minister of France. They both said, in December 2012, that European terrorists who were sent to Syria from France were called "French jihadis". They used the term "French jihadis". Those jihadis who were sent to Syria returned to France, violated its security and killed innocent French citizens owing to the lack of concern of the French Government and its sponsorship of terrorism early in the Syrian crisis. Some other European States regrettably did the same, and they had to pay for it later. That is exactly what my country, Syria, has suffered during the years of the crisis.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Sætre (Norway): Together with many others, Norway welcomes the publication of the Quartet's report and we would like to thank France for convening the Paris conference. The key message from both is the urgency of decisive action to save the two-State solution. There is no other credible path to durable peace. Nevertheless, the trends on the ground point unequivocally towards a one-State reality that is not compatible with that vision nor with the parties' stated interests.

Norway urges the parties to address the imminent threats to the two-State solution by implementing the recommendations in the Quartet report. The parties must demonstrate their serious commitment and show leadership in reversing the most disturbing trends, such as settlement expansion and the continuation of violence. Settlement expansion and related activities must stop. They are major obstacles to peace and are corroding the prospects for a two-State solution. Violence and terror must be curtailed.

The international community cannot assume the parties' responsibility to resolve the conflict. Nevertheless, we must play an active role in developing a credible framework, based on existing agreements and United Nations resolutions, for resolving all final status issues. While we continue to encourage the return to negotiations, the world urgently needs to rally around the task of building the two-State reality.

Through our chairmanship of the international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), Norway remains actively engaged in preparing Palestinian institutions for statehood and sustaining the Palestinian economy on a pathway towards greater self-reliance and independence. These efforts are helping to pave the way towards a two-State reality and are crucial to keeping this vision alive. Effective mechanisms for direct economic cooperation between the parties, combined with an international capacity for regular monitoring and reporting on the Palestinian economy — the essence of the AHLC's work — have proven to be worthwhile. This remains an exceptional model in the region.

At the latest AHLC meeting in Brussels, the parties agreed — together with the donors — on a two-year strategy that includes consolidating the budget by closing fiscal gaps and facilitating long-term economic development, including private sector investment. The next ministerial AHLC meeting is planned for 19 September, on the margins of the General Assembly in New York. The need to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria is more urgent than ever. Norway fully supports Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's efforts in this regard. All sides bear a heavy responsibility to turn the talks into a credible negotiating process that can lead to a genuine political transition. The parties must start tackling the difficult questions set out in resolution 2254 (2015).

In Libya too, a political solution is key to defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and building a lasting defence against this scourge and future mutations that may arise. Now is the time for all parties to come together under one legitimate Government of National Accord, in accordance with the Libyan political agreement.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I will present a summary of my statement; the full version will be circulated. I convey the Movement's appreciation to the Japanese presidency for convening this open debate at this critical juncture for the Palestinian people and the Middle East. I also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nikolay Mladenov, for his briefing.

Each and every time this Council holds an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question, NAM appeals for urgent international attention and action to address the illegal and brutal Israeli occupation that is causing so much anguish to the Palestinian people and dangerously inflaming tensions in an already volatile situation. How can the Council remain silent as Israel deliberately and systematically continues its repression of the Palestinian people, its denial of their rights and its colonization and de facto annexation of Palestinian land?

During the last open debate we — along with the whole international community — condemned Israel's declarations that it was designating 370 acres in the West Bank as so-called State land as part of its ongoing illegal settlement campaign. This has now been followed by yet another decision by Israel to advance plans for the construction of at least 800 more settlement units in and around occupied East Jerusalem, in grave breach of international law and in total contempt for Security Council resolutions and the calls of the international community to cease those violations. It should be noted that this announcement was made in the days immediately following the release of the Quartet report, further highlighting the inadequacy of such efforts to compel Israel to halt that illegal practice.

Emboldened by that impunity and by Security Council inaction, Israel, the occupying Power, has intensified its illegal, oppressive measures against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population, including, inter alia, the use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians, including children and women, causing more death and injury and depriving them of their right to protection. The destructive impact of such Israeli violations is immense, as reflected in rising tensions and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, and that impact is deepening among the Palestinian civilian population living under this nearly half-century of Israeli occupation. Any justification for such criminality must be rejected and action on the matter — in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and our moral responsibilities towards the question of Palestine — is long overdue.

NAM once again takes the opportunity to urge the international community, particularly the Security Council, to take a decisive, historic and long-overdue step towards ending the occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab lands and paving the way for fulfilment of the rights and independence of the Palestinian people and for a just and peaceful settlement to the conflict, including a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Here, we must once again caution that the status quo cannot be sustained forever.

In that regard, we recognize the ongoing regional and international efforts to generate the political will and momentum needed to resolve the conflict, including the 3 June 2016 ministerial meeting convened in Paris in support of Palestinian-Israeli peace and the pledge to convene an international peace conference toward that objective in the coming months. We call on the Security Council to perform its rightful role.

The Non-Aligned Movement seizes this opportunity to reaffirm its longstanding solidarity with the Palestinian people, recognizing their decades of resilience despite so much suffering and injustice. NAM reiterates its support for the realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including self-determination and freedom in an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as for finding a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Lebanon continues to suffer from successive Israeli violations of its borders and incursions into its territory, followed by year after year of occupation and aggression. Unfortunately, Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace, intensifying its incursions

over Lebanon. Such activities are a blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and the relevant international resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006). The provisions of that resolution should be implemented in a manner that guarantees the consolidation of the foundations of stability and security in Lebanon and that prevents Israel from violating Lebanese sovereignty on a daily basis.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement condemns all the measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, which have intensified since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. The Non-Aligned Movement demands once again that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, I thank you for convening this open debate. I also wish like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and acknowledge the interventions of the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

The ongoing conflict in Syria continues to generate appalling and preventable civilian suffering. Reports of renewed military offensives and counter-offensives by nearly all parties to the conflict, in violation of the cessation of hostilities still in force, are deeply worrisome.

Brazil has long held that the war needs to be and should be solved through a political process that is led and owned by the people of Syria. While reaffirming our strong support for the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, we cannot help but express our concern at the apparent lack of progress of the recent intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. All parties and their supporters must demonstrate the readiness to act constructively in the rounds to come and advance towards a political transition based on credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance and towards the drafting of a new constitution, as established by resolution 2254 (2015).

Brazil vehemently condemns all war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of terrorism and other serious violations committed in Syria and stresses the need for accountability. In that regard, I underscore the latest report of the Independent International Inquiry Commission on Syria, led by Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, which depicts a horrifying range of atrocities perpetrated by Da'esh against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, atrocities that may constitute a case of genocide. We also urge all parties and their supporters to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the prohibition on the deliberate targeting of civilians. Resolution 2286 (2016) was an important step towards strengthening the legal framework for the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities in armed conflict. That is highly relevant in Syria.

The recent release of the report of the Iraq Inquiry, a comprehensive report on the circumstances surrounding the 2003 military intervention of Iraq and its aftermath, is a sobering reminder of the perils of military action in the absence of a clear mandate issued by the Security Council. The repercussions of misguided and ill-informed choices made 13 years ago still threaten the security and stability of Iraq and the Middle East region in particular, but their overall negative effects on other parts of the world cannot be overlooked.

Brazil condemns, in the strongest terms, the terrorist attacks of 3 July, which killed more than two hundred people in Iraq — the deadliest in the country since the 2003 invasion — as well as the recent attacks that took place in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Yemen. Brazil conveys its condolences to all those affected by terrorist attacks and reiterates that there can be no justification for terrorism. Terrorism, which runs counter to all principles and values for which the United Nations stands, requires a coordinated response. In that regard, we commend the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/291 at the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, held on 1 July, and expect it to play an important role in guiding our collective efforts for the future.

We took good note of the report of the Middle East Quartet, which scrutinized the main impediments to a lasting resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute and offered concrete recommendations in that regard. Brazil believes that the report should have highlighted the illegality of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the challenges they pose to a peaceful resolution of the dispute. We acknowledge that steps

must be urgently taken to reverse current negative trends and advance towards the implementation of a two-State solution. We also draw attention to two important events held last month to discuss strategies to revitalize the peace process: a ministerial meeting in Paris, hosted by the Government of France, and a multilateral conference organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in Geneva.

Brazil expects that those developments will inspire the Security Council to fully exercise its responsibilities and actively lead international efforts to pursue, without further delay, the creation of a free, independent, sovereign and viable State for the Palestinian people within its 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and harmony with Israel. Regrettably, it has been more than seven years since the Council last adopted a resolution on this paramount issue.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dramatic, and acts of violence, which Brazil rejects unequivocally, continue to be committed by both sides. Brazil strongly condemns the recent wave of attacks in Israel and in the occupied territories, which have targeted mainly innocent civilians over the past several weeks. We join the Secretary-General in condemning and expressing disappointment over the recent announcement by Israel of its intention to expand the construction of settlement units in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Over the past few years, the international community has been given compelling evidence that such negative cycles of violence and retaliation against innocents will not contribute to fulfilling the aspiration of the majority of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples for sustainable peace.

In Libya, the Government of National Accord is still challenged by the need to consolidate its political authority and territorial control. Brazil urges all parties that have yet to comply with the Libyan Political Agreement to do so as early as possible in order to allow the restoration of the national unity of Libya. We reiterate our support for Special Representative Martin Kobler in these complex circumstances and express our hope that the United Nations Support Mission in Libya will soon be able to re-establish its presence in Tripoli.

While the humanitarian situation in Yemen remains dire, we are hopeful that ongoing negotiations between Yemeni parties in Kuwait, facilitated by the United Nations, will soon lead to a positive outcome. Brazil took note with interest of Special Envoy Cheikh Ahmed's peace road map, as well as his proposal to strengthen the Office of the Special Envoy in order to advance towards a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. We encourage all parties and their external supporters to cooperate in this endeavour and join efforts to restore peace and stability in Yemen, thereby leading to a draft Constitution, electoral reform and timely general elections, as determined by resolution 2201 (2015).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Lal (India): The situation in the Middle East region remains of serious concern and is becoming increasingly fragile and unpredictable. The growing threat of terrorism and radicalism has added to the complexities of the situation in the region, which is mired in protracted conflicts. The most long-standing of these conflicts involves Israel and Palestine and remains strained, with the peace talks suspended for more than two years now, with no signs of resumption, at least in the near future. The situation appears to be getting worse, with escalating violence on both sides and lack of restraint and moderation. The dire humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories and violence in Israel demand urgent and sustained efforts on the part of the global community to resume peace talks.

We welcome the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Israel and Palestine. As the Secretary-General has said, courageous steps are necessary for a negotiated two-State solution in order to bring lasting peace, security and dignity for the people of both Israel and Palestine. A two-State solution is the only viable option for sustaining peace in the region. It is the responsibility of the two sides to ensure that they move closer to a solution rather than farther away from one. In that regard, we stand with others in emphasizing that the international community must be firm in its resolve to assist the people on both sides wherever required. The Security Council must take a lead in this endeavour.

In that context, we welcome the first report of the Middle East Quartet on the impediments to a lasting solution and its recommendations to advance the two-State solution through negotiations. We also welcome the French peace initiative and the international conference held last month in Paris aimed at reviving the peace talks. We hope that the efforts by the

international community can lead to building some common ground and generate mutual understanding and a common political horizon, on which the two sides can start the talks again. We are of the firm belief that there can only be a politically negotiated solution to this issue for a lasting and durable peace.

India has a long-standing record of solidarity with the Palestinian people, support to the Palestinian cause and assistance for Palestine's nation-building, human-resource development and capacity-building efforts. A just solution to the issue must result in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet road map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Our continued commitment to the Palestinian cause and our friendship with the Palestinian people are reflected in the ongoing engagement with the Palestinian leadership and the recent high-level exchanges, including visits to Palestine by Indian leaders, including at the level of President and Minister of External Affairs.

On Yemen, we welcome the announcement of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, last week about an agreement on the guiding principles for the Yemen peace talks. We hope that the United Nations-supported talks, which will enter a new phase in the coming weeks, will lead to a consensus-based solution.

On Syria, India welcomes the briefing by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura. We hope for a comprehensive political resolution of the conflict with the participation of all parties. We further hope that the intra-Syrian talks under United Nations auspices will ensure a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned inclusive political transition, bringing an end to the violence in Syria, and contribute to stabilizing the country and the region. The humanitarian situation in Syria remains a serious concern and has to be addressed effectively. India remains committed to providing bilateral humanitarian assistance to Syria.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank the Japanese presidency for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East.

Since this is the first statement of my delegation in the Security Council after being elected as a non-permanent member on the Council for 2017 and 2018, I would like to thank delegations for supporting the candidature of Kazakhstan, which my country considers a solemn and serious responsibility. It is significant that one of our first statements to the Council following the elections is on this challenging agenda item.

We give great importance to the Middle East region and pay particular attention to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. In his latest report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/71/87-E/2016/67), the Secretary-General points to the negative trends on the ground which, according to him, make the two-State solution more distant. We share his concerns and those of the report of the Middle East Quartet released earlier this month. My delegation therefore urges the Quartet to pursue its mediation efforts even more robustly and arrive at negotiations in order to ensure stability however uphill the task may appear.

My delegation also shares the view of other Member States that the two-State solution, recognition of the right to self-determination of Palestinians and the creation of an independent State of Palestine peacefully coexisting with Israel within the 1967 borders are the only means for achieving a durable peace. We also stand for promoting Palestine's full-fledged membership in the United Nations and encourage Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate the political commitment needed to reach a historic peace agreement.

The Government of Kazakhstan fully endorses the long-standing proposal of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Establishing such a zone is dictated by the pivotal role it would play in ensuring both regional and global security. Once again, we call upon all interested parties to exercise understanding and trust to overcome the different viewpoints that militate against the creation of such a zone.

Kazakhstan fully supports the Syrian peace process within the Geneva III peace talks and the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). We call on Member States to endorse the measures of the Secretary-General, the Arab League and the International Syria Support Group to find viable solutions. To make our contribution, Kazakhstan hosted two rounds of Syrian consultations in Astana in

2015. These were attended by the leaders of different opposition groups and representatives of Syrian ethnic and religious minorities.

Given the current trends, our world, and the Middle East in particular, are once again in danger. The risks cannot be underestimated. It is from this perspective that, in April 2016, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan presented a new security paradigm document entitled "Manifesto: The World. The Twenty-First Century". The Manifesto is significant as it takes a momentous stand on the issues of war and peace. To implement it, President Nazarbayev proposed establishing a global coalition of States for peace, stability, trust and security under the auspices of the United Nations. The shared task of this coalition for the next decade would be to end wars and conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria and eastern Ukraine, as well as the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation.

Our President also emphasized that if the world is to be free of conflict, the injustices created by global policies, which are the root cause of tensions and which impede development, must be removed. At the same time, the principles of international law must be reaffirmed, respected by all countries and accompanied by decisive steps towards demilitarization. All of these aspects are highly relevant to the situation in the Middle East.

As a step towards religious unity, at the recent thirteenth summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Istanbul in April, the leadership of Kazakhstan, together with Turkey as the host country, initiated the process of Islamic reconciliation as a new paradigm of relations in the Muslim world. This process is aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of disputes and strengthening the unity of the Islamic Ummah. We therefore call on the Governments of all countries in the region to take the necessary measures to prevent the further escalation of sectarian tensions through dialogue among and with religious leaders.

Finally, we reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to joining the multilateral effort to ensure peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Sevilla Borja (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We take the floor at today's important open debate of the Security Council to reiterate Ecuador's historic commitment to the cause of peace in the Middle East and its support for the efforts of the international community to resolve outstanding conflicts in the region through peaceful methods delineated under international law for the settlement of disputes.

The fact that in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the independent State of Palestine has not yet been established or joined the United Nations as a full-fledged State Member, as set forth in the partition plan contained in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, makes resolving this issue the fundamental and priority duty of the Organization. We are therefore concerned about the lack of effective action by the Security Council, the indifference of the Powers directly involved and the obstinacy of extremist sectors in the State of Israel that have been encouraged by external supporters.

At the same time, we are encouraged that, in its latest report, the Quartet has reiterated that

> "a negotiated two-State outcome is the only way to achieve an enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for Statehood and sovereignty, [and] ends the occupation that began in 1967".

The report also offers a glimmer of hope that in the form of the laudable efforts of France, with its initiative to convene an international conference on the Middle East.

Finally, we reiterate the continued support of the Government and the people of Ecuador for the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. If the international community had resolved this issue with due timeliness, it would have spared us a great deal in terms of terrible human suffering and we would have avoided the rise of the reprehensible terrorist acts that are disrupting world peace today. We are facing a highly political issue that requires political solutions, even though it has involved gross violations of international law and serious attacks on human rights and has had reprehensible humanitarian consequences.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): The Holy See commends the Japanese presidency for once more bringing the difficult situation in the Middle East to the

attention of the international community, in the light of the release of the Quartet's 1 July report on the Middle East and in the context of the continuing violence in Syria, the deadly sectarian violence in Iraq and the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The Palestinian question has remained without an answer that is satisfactory to both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Almost 69 years after its adoption by the General Assembly, resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, remains only half-fulfilled. Decades of negotiations have failed to achieve the creation of a Palestinian State. The time is long overdue to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has become increasingly unacceptable as it becomes increasingly intractable.

My delegation would not miss this occasion to underline once more that, for the Holy See, the two-State solution holds the best promise. Durable peace will remain a distant dream, and security will remain an illusion if Israel and Palestine do not agree to exist side by side, reconciled and sovereign, within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders. Let the two States be created now for the sake of the Israelis and Palestinians who, in the depths of their hearts, desire nothing greater than peace and security. It is time to act on the recommendations of the 1 July report of the Quartet by bringing peace and security to the citizens of Israel and the State of Palestine and to the people of the world.

The situation in Syria remains one of unspeakable suffering for the Syrian people who are being killed, forced to survive under bombs or flee to less-ravaged areas. My delegation feels duty-bound to call the Council's attention once again to the continuing persecution of Christians, Yazidis and other ethnic and religious minority groups by non-State actors in parts of Syria and Iraq.

Pope Francis has denounced in the strongest possible terms all those responsible, from whichever side of the conflict in Syria they may come, for the senseless slaughter of civilians. The Pope has also denounced those who supply substantial amounts of money and weaponry to fighters who kill and maim the innocent population and destroy civilian institutions and infrastructure. One cannot but lament the duplicity of simultaneously talking peace while supplying arms to those who kill on every side of the conflict. Pope Francis has asked: How can you believe in someone who caresses you with the right hand and strikes you with the left?

My delegation avails itself of this opportunity to plead once more to the weapons-producing States to strictly limit the supply of arms to client States and monitor their use. In particular, my delegation asks the international community to stop the illegal supply of arms to non-State actors who have been lately responsible for crimes against humanity, other forms of mass atrocity and egregious violation of human rights.

Statistics have clearly shown that it is the civilian population which is disproportionately victimized by ever-more technologically sophisticated weapons. Remote-controlled assassinations without the due process of law and so-called collateral damage to civilians by lethal autonomous weapons systems bring to the fore ethical and legal questions that merit careful review and perhaps even a challenge on the basis of international humanitarian law.

The Holy See believes that peace processes do not depend solely on formal negotiations, no matter how indispensable they may be. As the cradle of great civilizations and the birthplace of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Middle East has the cultural, intellectual and religious resources that make it a fertile ground for civil society and track II diplomacy, including faith-based informal diplomacy, to play their role in promoting the values of encounter and mutual acceptance, thereby equipping all citizens to become active protagonists in peacemaking and peacebuilding in the region. Religions and believers, in particular, must prove themselves worthy of their rightful place in the whole process of pacification in the region.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): At the outset, Mr. President, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your country on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month and ensuring sustained attention in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

South Africa fully supports the Security Council's convening of regular open debates on this matter, as it allows all Member States an opportunity to express their views and to inject greater impetus into the negotiations, as this is one of the most protracted matters on the

Council's agenda. We also express our appreciation to Japan's predecessor, the French Republic, for the manner in which it led the deliberations of the Council during the month of June, as well as its continued commitment to finding a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While we reiterate that the central responsibility for achieving peace is primarily in the hands of Palestinians and Israelis, the international community does have a responsibility to support and encourage the parties towards that endeavour. South Africa is of the opinion that the basis of the negotiations, which has been the two-State solution, is being threatened by the increasing construction of illegal settlements in occupied territories, as well as by heightened tension and sporadic acts of violence between Palestinians and Israelis.

The French initiative endorsed by the international community in Paris in June is welcome as an effort to resuscitate the peace process and thereby prevent the two-State solution from slipping away. As South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation stated at the Paris meeting, "this initiative is like the first raindrop after a long drought, and we hope it will nourish the peace process".

South Africa would like to highlight the views of the participants in Paris, stressing that both sides should demonstrate their commitment to the two-State solution and resolve all permanent status issues through direct negotiations based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We also welcome the Paris communiqué, recalling relevant Security Council resolutions, further highlighting the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the key role of the Quartet, and welcoming the French offer to coordinate an international conference before the end of the year. It is essential that the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map constitute the international legal framework of those initiatives.

The Quartet report that was released last week was eagerly anticipated to provide leadership and direction for moving the peace process forward. The report rightfully calls upon each side to

> "independently demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to the two-State solution and refrain from unilateral steps that prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations".

However, the reaction of the parties, in particular the Palestinians, is indicative of some level of disenchantment with the Quartet.

For a long time, our responsibility has been deferred to the Quartet, to which the United Nations provides moral legitimacy. In the light of the Quartet's recent report, the international community must assert its moral and legal weight by insisting that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process take place in accordance with the international legal framework whereby the United Nations will play its role as neutral arbiter. The international conference proposed in Paris is an opportunity for the international community to play such a role.

The Security Council, in turn, must play its part in support of the international efforts. The Council has been known to support other peace processes with resolutions demanding compliance with international obligations. That approach has led to successful conclusions of conflicts as parties to the conflict recognized that non-compliance would result in punitive measures. The same is needed in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

We deplore the fact that four days following the release of the Quartet report, Israeli authorities announced plans to build additional housing units in the West Bank. That has detracted from any progress made in resolving the conflict. As the Secretary-General has stated, the continuing construction of settlements

> "raises legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions, which are compounded by continuing statements of some Israeli ministers calling for the annexation of the West Bank".

The fact that Israel was able to make that announcement immediately following the call in the Quartet report for a halt in settlements further undermines the effectiveness of the Quartet.

The message emanating from Paris is that the time has come for the parties to resume negotiations with the full support of the international community, based on the existing international legal framework, and to work towards a two-State solution. The Council must play its part in dissuading unilateral measures that may impede the realization of the two-State solution that has eluded the peoples of the region for too long. It is high time that the Security Council assume its full responsibility with respect to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. We trust in your ability to promote the principles of peace and harmony, and commend your initiative to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during Japan's presidency. That clearly reflects your country's interest and concern for this topic and a readiness to focus the necessary attention to this problem. This is a subject to which my country accords great importance owing to our Arab and Muslim loyalties.

The situation in Palestine, and in Jerusalem in particular, is deteriorating. We find that the international community is being distracted by other developments. But the importance of those developments must not deter us from finding a solution to another important conflict that has continued for many years, namely, the Palestinian question, which is the pivotal issue par excellence in the Middle East and the key to resolving all other issues. We commend and support the French efforts to address the situation and to find a means for the parties to return to the negotiating table in order to find a solution based on the two-State solution. The Kingdom of Morocco and His Majesty the King support the French initiative for peace in the Middle East, and His Majesty has expressed that support more than once. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs participated alongside his colleagues from the Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as a representative of the Arab side, in the deliberations of the ministerial conference held in Paris on 3 June. That meeting culminated in an important communiqué that expresses support for the two-State solution and underscores the importance of returning to negotiations. Morocco looks forward to the outcome of the French initiative via an international conference to be held in the coming months to revive the peace process in order to achieve the two-State solution and an independent State for Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders.

It is worth mentioning that, at the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation hosted by Turkey recently, His Majesty King Mohammed VI endorsed the call by President Abbas of Palestine to convene and international peace conference to end the Israeli occupation. He deemed that as an essential step towards ending the tragic and explosive situation in Palestine and restoring hope in finding a lasting, just and comprehensive peace, based on the two-State solution.

Morocco has taken note of the recently issued report of the Middle East Quartet. We continue to hope that the Quartet will live up to its role and overcome the stagnation and the vicious cycle of violence, which leads youths of the region to extremism and terrorism. We therefore call upon the Quartet to redouble its efforts and to work with both parties and all the relevant stakeholders to push forward the peace process in order to achieve the two-State solution based on all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Kingdom of Morocco, headed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, has reiterated on several occasions the need not to Judaize Jerusalem and not to violate the holy site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. That will not serve peace or regional security, but plays into the hands of terrorists. We also reiterate that the Arab Peace Initiative, based on the establishment of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the pre-1967 borders, is the only way to resolve the situation.

In conclusion, we reiterate that, more than ever, the international community must endeavour to reinvigorate the peace process and set a clear time frame on the basis on legally binding resolutions of the Council. As ever, Morocco is committed to participate actively in any initiative aimed at promoting the peace process in order to achieve peace, security and stability in the region and to establish a State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security. That is the only way to resolve the Palestinian question and to achieve peace in the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Japan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I believe that your able leadership, Sir, will guide the Council in the right direction in the fulfilment of its mandate on the maintenance of international peace and security. I also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive and informative briefing this morning.

I would also like to extend the Republic of Korea's heartfelt condolences to the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Istanbul, Dhaka, Medina, Jeddah, Qatif and Baghdad, as well as our best wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured. The Republic of Korea condemns those heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks in the strongest terms and will continue to join the international community's counter-terrorism efforts.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the series of efforts undertaken by the international community to facilitate the resumption of the peace process between Israel and Palestine, including the Paris conference held on 3 June, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's visit to the region in late June and the Middle East Quartet report released on 1 July. All those efforts share the same purpose, namely, revitalizing the two-State solution process. Unfortunately, however, the reactions of the parties to the Quartet report are raising questions as to whether they have a genuine intention to enter into serious negotiations to realize the two-State solution. In particular, we express strong concern over the recent decision by the Israeli Government to advance plans to build more settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Republic of Korea believes confidence-building measures, including ending settlement expansion in the occupied territories, are urgently required to safeguard the two-State solution. We call on the leaders of both parties to demonstrate genuine commitment to the two-State solution through policies and actions, as described in the Quartet report.

On Syria, the Republic of Korea commends the efforts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and concurs with his view that a nationwide ceasefire, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access and a parallel political process are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In that regard, a recent agreement on a nationwide ceasefire for the Eid Al-Fitr holiday and improvement in humanitarian access are commendable steps. However, the situation on the ground — including frequent ceasefire violations, "stop-and-go" humanitarian access and the ongoing use of siege tactics — shows that the efforts of the parties to the conflict are still falling short when it comes to abiding by their existing commitments and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In addition to the joint letter dated 14 June addressed to the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, co-sponsored by 59 Member States, including the Republic of Korea, we once again urge all the parties to strictly comply with the cessation of hostilities, and the Syrian Government to guarantee full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access. Those concrete actions will pave the way for a negotiated political transition, which is the only way to end this war.

Turning to Yemen, the Republic of Korea hopes that the peace talks, to be resumed on 15 July in Kuwait, will produce concrete outcomes, such as resolving the differences between the parties over key issues of the road map proposed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. We also call on the parties and key regional players to step up their efforts to maintain the cessation of hostilities during the negotiations, and beyond.

While the situation in the Middle East remains chaotic and has resulted in enormous human suffering, the international community's efforts to end the protracted conflicts and achieve sustainable peace continue. Through previous experience we learn that what matters most is not the repetition of words but concrete actions to make real changes on the ground..

The Republic of Korea urges all the parties to conflict to take the necessary measures to resolve those conflicts and bring about peace. The Republic of Korea will continue to play a constructive role to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): We express our appreciation to the Japanese presidency for convening this open debate.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Kuwait on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Bangladesh welcomes the fact that the Palestinian question is being discussed in the Security Council periodically in the wider context of the Middle East. This should help build impetus for resuming negotiations to resolve all the final status issues, as also envisaged for the international conference to be convened in the coming months.

We stress the need for upholding the spirit of the joint communiqué issued by the ministerial meeting in Paris on 3 June. The overriding message is that the

world expects the Council to act in a determined, visible and sustained manner to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. The continued occupation of the Palestinian territories, the systematic human rights violations, the indiscriminate attacks against civilians and the expansion of illegal settlements by Israel, the occupying Power, constitute an affront to the values and principles that the Organization stands for. The Council must demonstrate its resolve to address the Palestinian question as a matter of urgency.

The continued breaches of international humanitarian law and the occupation of Palestinian territories have given rise to an egregious culture of impunity. In the absence of any international accountability or sanctions, the occupying Power continues to kill Palestinian citizens, especially youth and children, imprisoning and abusing scores of Palestinians in its detention centres and injuring and displacing thousands of Palestinian families through its construction and expansion of illegal settlements. It is obvious that the settlements and the wall in and around occupied East Jerusalem are being deliberately pursued in order to fundamentally change the character, status and demography of the occupied Palestinian territories. That will serve only to indefinitely postpone the Middle East peace process, and thus destabilize the prospects for a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

The Council has a moral obligation to prevail upon Israel to immediately halt its illegal settlement regime in the occupied Palestinian territories, lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and put an end to all forms of occupation. Immediate priority must be given to ensuring international protection for the Palestinian people, who have suffered for decades from Israel's policy of collective punishment.

The recently released Quartet report provides a rather dismal assessment of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Yet the report has probably only covered part of the concerns that continue to characterize the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As has been noted, Israel continues to announce and implement its settlement expansion plans in the occupied territories, including in and around East Jerusalem, even in the aftermath of the release of the Quartet report. That casts a shadow on the possibility of moving towards implementing the recommendations of the report.

We have stated a number of times here, and will continue to do so, that the continued injustice with regard to the Palestinian question remains at the root of a number of scourges that bedevil international peace and security. Among a host of potential scenarios, the resolution of the Palestinian question will help dry up the ideological reservoir that many international terrorists and violent extremist groups tend to draw on. The moral and ethical issues involved in the Palestinian question need to be unequivocally upheld in order to defeat the twisted and corrosive massaging used by violent extremists to serve their own vested agenda.

That was recently brought home to us in Bangladesh in the most gruesome manner, as we have witnessed an expansion in the demographics of our home-grown terrorists, now also being drawn from a section of educated cosmopolitan youth. Initial investigations show that some of those young people had been exposed to narratives that tend to build a case for extremism under the pretext of religion, on the basis of real or perceived injustices suffered by people in the Middle East and elsewhere, especially in Palestine. That is a challenge that we are not in a position to deal with on our own. If we are to succeed in our efforts to address the internal and local drivers of violent extremism and terrorism, we need the international community's meaningful support and commitment to resolve the external drivers, including foreign occupation and protracted conflicts.

In line with our constitutional commitment, the Government and the people of Bangladesh maintain their unwavering support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with Israel. Our Prime Minister, Sheik Hasina, has consistently articulated that in her annual address at the General Assembly. We continue to urge all key actors to remained seized of efforts to pursue a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and the principle of land for peace.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our support for a draft resolution of the Council to revive political efforts aimed at achieving the desired two-State solution and at the convening an international conference to

address the multidimensional aspects of the Palestinian question in a focused, structured and holistic manner.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland): Allow me to thank the Japanese presidency of the Security Council for organizing this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The Middle East region remains steeped in conflict and crisis. Despite determined efforts by the international community, the suffering of millions of civilians continues. Neighbouring countries to the conflicts continue to be severely impacted. Among the intractable problems facing the region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be soluble, but actions by both sides have continued to undermine the only viable path to peace, namely, the two-State solution.

We welcome the Quartet report, which provides a clear description of the principal threats to achieving a negotiated peace in the form of a two-State solution. Violence and incitement to violence on both sides receive due attention. The wave of violent acts against ordinary Israelis, settler violence against Palestinians, rocket attacks from Gaza and disproportionate security action by Israeli forces all widen the gulf that will need to be bridged.

The report also describes the detrimental effects of settlement expansion, land designations for exclusive Israeli use and the denial of Palestinian development and demolitions of Palestinian structures, and urges Israel to implement positive and significant policy shifts, including transferring powers and responsibilities in Area C.

We welcome France's initiative to assist in finding a way for the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to achieve peace, as well as France's offer to coordinate an international conference before the end of the year.

The Quartet report provides a basis for action, first of all by the parties to the conflict. The 10 recommendations are addressed mainly to them. But the report also provides a basis for concerted action by the Security Council. The report calls upon each side to independently demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to the two-State solution. But breaches of commitments have been ongoing. There is an opportunity for the Security Council to back up the recommendations of the Quartet with clear instructions to the parties. It is time that the Council put its weight behind the Quartet's conclusions that continuing on the current course will make the two-State solution increasingly remote. The alternative, according to the Quartet, is entrenching a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

We encourage the Security Council to take action and to back the recommendations of the Quartet by way of a draft resolution. We also join in encouraging both parties to foster a climate of tolerance that can strengthen the foundations for peace and counter violent extremism.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wilfried Emvula, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Emvula: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People welcomes recent efforts to break the political stalemate. These are the first rays of hope since bilateral negotiations came to a halt in the spring of last year. The Government of France brought key international stakeholders to Paris in June, who agreed on multilateral efforts to help advance the prospects for peace, including by providing meaningful incentives to the parties to make peace.

Two weeks ago, the Middle East Quartet published its long-awaited report, in which it highlighted major threats to the two-State solution and provided recommendations on how to create the conditions for meaningful peace negotiations. The Committee underscores the need for strong and determined steps to reverse the negative threats immediately. In all of those efforts, the international community is unanimous in its view that the only way to achieve an enduring piece will be on the basis of relevant resolutions, including of the Council, and a negotiated two-State outcome that meets Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and Israeli security needs, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues.

The Committee fully and expressly supports peace efforts. On 29 and 30 June, we organized and international conference in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace in Geneva under the theme "Peace Is Possible — Frameworks for a Way Forward". It assembled experienced peace negotiators and international experts, including from the State of

Palestine and Israel, to discuss lessons learned and past initiatives and to discuss new ideas.

To facilitate a similar exchange of ideas, in early May, the Committee also organized a conference on Jerusalem, which is at the heart of a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. I have describe those recent international efforts as the first rays of hope. Too often we have seen such rays vanish because we, the international community, the United Nations and the Council did not do enough to support and bolster previous efforts, or because the international community prioritized other seemingly more urgent issues. However, in doing so, we overlooked one key issue, namely, that the long-standing inability to find a durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the reasons for radicalization in the Middle East and beyond.

In the same vein, visions of security for Israel without a just and sustainable peace with Palestine are delusory. Collective punishments, such as the blockade of Gaza, demolitions of houses of suspected terrorists and the denial of working permits, do not produce acquiescence. They produce resentment and resistance. Likewise, preventing Palestinian development in Area C of the occupied West Bank, building illegal settlements and the taking of land for exclusive Israeli use only increase a sense of frustration and hopelessness and call into question Israel's commitment to a two-State solution.

A recent example is the decision by the Government of Israel on new settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, just two days after the Quartet report was published. Unilateral security measures also can never be enough to resolve the underlying causes of violence. What is needed is leadership, providing a political horizon and immediate changes on the ground so that Palestinians can start regaining hope. What is needed is a fundamental return to agreed negotiating principles and parameters as reiterated the Arab Peace Initiative, at the Paris ministerial conference and the various Quartet reports. In this, the State of Palestine is a partner for peace. However, its capacity and ability to deliver are severely hampered by the continuing occupation and by the destruction of its physical and social infrastructure.

In May, our Committee held a seminar in Stockholm on assistance to the Palestinian people, at which experts reviewed the challenges and constraints to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the State of Palestine under the Israeli occupation and looked at ways of building resilient and sustainable economic growth while addressing humanitarian needs. A main focus of the seminar was on long-term investment in youth and women as a key to building a peaceful and inclusive society. It was encouraging to hear the voices of Palestinian youth, as well as testimony by Ms. Hanan Al-Hroub from the West Bank, the recipient of the 2016 Global Teachers Prize, who is teaching Palestinian children traumatized by the constant violence against them that saying no to violence is the right path towards a good future.

The de facto political division of Gaza and the West Bank continues to affect Palestinian society and efforts towards a peaceful solution of the conflict. The Committee welcomes recent reconciliation talks and expresses its hope that they will soon come to fruition. However, this division cannot be an excuse for international inaction or a delay in donor support for Gaza reconstruction. The people of Gaza deserve better.

The Committee also welcomes the call for local council elections in October of this year and hopes that they will be held throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Gaza. Good governance and transparent political structures are essential for Palestine and Palestinians to develop their State and its institutions and to take their rightful place among the nations of the world. For those efforts to be carried out, the continued and increased support of the international community is needed. The notion that development must wait until the humanitarian crisis is over or a political solution is reached is short-sighted, as is the one that the beginning of development projects indicates that there is no longer any need for humanitarian aid. There is no law that prevents education programmes, health care and the creation of livelihoods from starting even while the rubble is being cleared.

Today, I have deliberately focused on the rays of hope shining against the backdrop of all the violence and despair in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and the region beyond. It is very tempting to adopt a bleak and morose view. We must fight that temptation. As was said at the Committee's conference last month in Geneva, peace is possible, but it requires the efforts of everyone and leadership. Both peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, expect and depend on it from their own leaders and all of us. Let us not disappoint them.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): As we approach the fiftieth year of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, the prospects for a lasting peace remain grim. The revitalization of the peace process is not only necessary to grant a dignified life to the Palestinian people, but also a fundamental requirement for achieving stability within the region. We are very concerned about the deteriorating situation on the ground. The expansion of illegal settlements, land confiscations, the displacement of native communities, denying the Palestinians' right to use natural resources and the prevailing culture of impunity erode the viability of a two-State solution.

The total area allocated to settlements has doubled since the Oslo peace agreements, as part of Israel's policy to keep East Jerusalem isolated from the West Bank and Gaza. As recently as the beginning of July, the Israeli Government advanced new plans for 800 additional housing units in illegal settlements. In addition, 10 per cent of the West Bank is cut off from the rest of the territory by the separation wall. The current situation is neither acceptable nor sustainable. The Israeli Government's practices in contravention of international law must stop. Furthermore, the preservation of the status and sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif are essential for stability and future harmony.

The historical injustice against the Palestinian people is fuelling resentment, alienation and radicalism in and beyond the region. The only way out of this impasse is to convince the Palestinians that their future will be better than today. That can be achieved only if the Palestinians sit at the negotiation table as the State of Palestine with equal standing with Israel. In that regard, the recognition of the State of Palestine by more than 137 countries and its full integration into international forums would raise hopes for the possibility of a two-State solution on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative. In addition, initiatives such as the Paris ministerial conference, in which we also took part, represent important opportunities at a time when the revival of the peace process has become an urgent necessity. Last but not least, to reach a lasting peace, it is also crucial for the Palestinians to voice their legitimate demands for unity. Turkey will continue its efforts aimed at Palestinian reconciliation.

Empowering the Palestinian people and improving their living conditions through development assistance and investments is more urgent than ever. In that understanding, Turkey's $200 million pledge for the period from 2014 to 2017 is channelled into various projects, such as the construction of an industrial zone in Jenin in the West Bank, a hospital in Tubas and a girls' dormitory for Al-Quds University. The agreement to normalize our bilateral relations with Israel was concluded on 26 June in Rome, in accordance with the parameters put forward following the *Mavi Marmara* incident.

That will be instrumental to further increasing our efforts to alleviate the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, particularly in Gaza. As a follow up to that, the first shipment of our humanitarian aid reached Gaza on 4 July through the port of Ashdod. In addition, the Turkey-Palestine Friendship Hospital, with a 200-bed capacity, will be ready to provide services following the installation of medical equipment. The construction project for 320 housing units in Gaza will also soon be finalized.

The establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, continues to be the only viable solution. Turkey's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people to that end will never cease.

The ongoing grave situation in Syria, in particular the devastating humanitarian conditions, continues to unravel the very principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Turkey continues to shoulder a large part of the burden of the ongoing devastation. The humanitarian and security repercussions of the crisis constitute a direct threat to our national security. The chaos in the northern part of Syria has played into the hands of terrorists, targeting our citizens as well. We have a common interest in bringing peace and stability to Syria through a genuine political transition. However, no substantial progress has been made on the following fronts, upon which the efforts of the international community have been concentrated.

The cessation of hostilities, which is systematically violated by the regime and its supporters, has actually ceased to exist. The talks on establishing a ceasefire in Aleppo go hand in hand with the regime's attempts to put the city under siege. That is what the word "ceasefire" means to the regime. The humanitarian situation is no different. The provision of basic needs continues to be interrupted. Its timing, content and geographical scope are almost completely left to the mercy of the

regime. The regime continues to use barrel bombs and attack civilians and civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, mosques, markets and camps for internally displaced persons. The Security Council must ensure the implementation of all the measures envisaged by its very own resolutions.

If the picture on the ground is to remain unchanged, there will be no prospect for a successful outcome in the next round of talks in Geneva. The opposition, represented by the High Negotiations Committee cannot be expected to negotiate under fire. In addition, attempts to dilute and weaken the opposition will only harm the process. Without further delay, the regime should be pressured to talk about the political transition with concrete timelines, a new Constitution and elections. A transitional governing body with full executive powers should be established. After six years of brutality and crime, the Syrian people cannot be expected to settle for anything less.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Missaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your wise presidency of the Council for this month, and thanking you for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

I would like to align my delegation with the statements made on behalf the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the non-aligned countries.

I would be remiss if I failed to condemn the recent terrorist attacks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey and Bangladesh. I would like to offer our condolences to those brotherly and friendly countries.

The first report of the Quartet, published early this month, affirms that the ongoing occupation policies, the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the confiscation of Palestinian property by Israelis imperil the current search for a settlement. Israel continues to unilaterally claim territory. There are some 370,000 settlers living in Area C in the West Bank. The report confirms that such practices undermine the potential for a two-State solution desired by the international community, raising questions about Israel's intentions and commitment to a two-State solution, especially in the light of the position of certain Israeli Ministers who reject the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Despite calls in the Quartet's report for an end to settler activities, the occupation authorities declared, only days after the report was published, that they intended to build 560 residential units in addition to 240 previously announced units in East Jerusalem, which was criticized by the Secretary-General in his briefing this morning. These practices violate all international laws and conventions and confirm beyond any doubt that Israel is continuing its *fait accompli* policy to gain more time, annex more Palestinian territory and force the population out. The policy impedes any attempt to open new horizons for peace consistent with the two-State vision. Such a vision has eroded and with it so have the prospects for peace.

Regrettably, all these practices continue unabated while the international community, in particular the Security Council, remains silent. However, my delegation believes that it is no longer acceptable to remain silent before these *faits accomplis*. The time has come for the international community, in particular the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibility and put an end to the unprecedented occupation and the settler activity. We all agree that the settlements are illegal and illegitimate. We further agree that they are the crux of the matter and the true reason for the tensions in the territories and in the region.

The time has come for a real change in the way the Security Council addresses the question of Palestine. It is time for the Council to deliver justice to the Palestinian people and enable them to recover and fulfil their legitimate rights. The current situation is clearly threatening to create further tensions in a region that has already had enough. Continued feelings of resentment and helplessness before historical injustices are what is causing extremism and violence.

There is no hope if we do not address the situation in a just manner. First and foremost, we must seriously and responsibly work to put an end to settler colonialism as a precondition for achieving a just and comprehensive solution. Only this will guarantee the Palestinian people's ability to build a State on its own land, on contiguous territories, on territories that have been occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid terms of reference.

My delegation supports any international effort that can contribute to achieving this objective. We welcome France's call at the Paris meeting on 3 June for the

convening of an international conference on this issue. The final communiqué of the Paris meeting stressed the need to end occupation as well as the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative in the realization of a peace consistent with the vision of the two States. Tunisia supports the Palestinian demand for protection for its civilians in the Palestinian territories, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and other international conventions. In addition, my delegation welcomes the intention of the Special Rapporteur to visit to the region for the purposes of preparing a report to be submitted to the General Assembly in October.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the general and comprehensive peace process in the Middle East region needs to be a comprehensive one. Peace cannot be achieved without Israel's complete withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan and the territories that are still under occupation in southern Lebanon.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Al-Moumani (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Japan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I would also like to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing this morning.

Our region is witnessing great intellectual and political challenges due to an indescribably bitter reality. Our words will never be able to match the suffering and devastation that has been seen in our region, be it in Syria, the Palestinian territories or Yemen. These challenges force us to ask ourselves if the international community is doing enough to resolve these conflicts, pursuant to international agreements and law. Indeed, are we doing everything possible to achieve peace and stability?

Through its recent membership in the Security Council, Jordan exerted great efforts and was able to bring the question to the fore in an attempt to resolve all conflicts in the Middle East. We have expressed our thoughts on how to resolve conflicts in the region and have often reiterated that the main issue continues to be the Palestinian question, with its absence of peace and the lack of a just and lasting solution. This conflict is constricting all other efforts to achieve peace anywhere else in the Middle East.

The relationship between peace in the region and the Palestinian question is clear. What we need is a comprehensive approach to resolving this issue, as well as a real effort on the part of the international community to resolve it permanently. We cannot allow violent and extremist groups to take advantage of this conflict and exploit the gaps it creates with a view to expanding their influence in the region and the world as a whole.

Every day, the Israelis violate international law, destroy homes and expel populations. Their goal is to change the reality on the ground. They categorically reject all efforts to achieve a systemic settlement. We are therefore obligated to ask the Council to live up to its responsibilities and end the settlement activity immediately. The settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank are in violation of international law, and what Israel does on the ground contradicts its public statements. On the way to relaunching negotiations between the two sides, it places greater obstacles to any possible success.

Nevertheless, in this context, Jordan reiterates the importance of resuming serious negotiations based on the two-State solution, but with a deadline, with a view to establishing an independent, completely sovereign Palestinian State on Palestinian soil and within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative. This goal is consistent with Jordan's interests, as my country is vitally connected to all aspects of the Palestinian question.

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein has always given and will continue to give attention to a related question of grave concern, namely, attacks on Palestinian and Muslim holy sites. His Majesty is using all his considerable influence to oppose Israel's attacks on our sanctuaries. Indeed, in line with our historical custodianship of the region, Jordan will stand up to anyone who tries to commit acts of transgression against holy sites. We will take any and all measures, diplomatic and legal, to counter Israeli violations in Jerusalem. All Israeli acts in this area are null and void and without any legal consequence because they have been authorized by an illegitimate occupying Power.

Regional or international initiatives designed to solve the Palestinian question will not be realized without genuine political will and the commitment to push such initiatives forward. But, more importantly,

their success will depend on the seriousness of Israel and the sincerity of its intention — or the lack thereof — to achieve a lasting peace.

The practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories must stop. This is not just a Palestinian demand, but an international demand to give the Palestinian people the right to live in peace and sovereignty on its soil. The situation requires greater efforts by all parties to give momentum to the negotiations to allow for a political resolution to be achieved, particularly based on resolution 2254 (2015).

Jordan continues to support the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and the International Syria Support Group. We hope that the negotiations will succeed and that we will reach an agreement for the transitional phase in Syria that will allow peace and stability to return to that nation and for the Syrian refugees to return to their homeland and contribute to its reconstruction. Perhaps the increased number of refugees and their continued flow from Syria to neighbouring countries and to Europe is proof of the scope of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, which is affecting the entire region. Jordan continues to act based on its moral obligation to the Syrian refugees. That is taking its toll on our limited resources. We are under great pressure. This requires the international community to fulfil its obligations and to provide greater support, in accordance with the promises made in London last month. Syrian refugees are facing great difficulties.

We are deeply concerned that terrorist organizations continue to control areas of Syria, Iraq and Libya. Such groups also continue to act based on extremist ideologies and to perpetrate attacks in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Belgium, Turkey and on the borders of Jordan and Syria. Those developments confirm that the war against those deviant factions has become, as His Majesty King Adbullah II has said, a third world war using different means, which requires international coordination among all the nations of the world. Terrorist organizations have warped the image of Islam — again, necessitating coordination and cooperation among all countries in confronting terrorism. We must show strong determination to unify our efforts and implement the relevant Security Council resolutions to face up to those gangs, in particular the the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

We trust that peace, security and stability can be achieved in the Middle East. We in Jordan are determined to contribute to those efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Maldives.

Ms. Naeem (Maldives): Let me begin by thanking Japan's presidency of the Security Council for convening this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East.

The Middle East remains one of the world's most volatile regions and continues to pose a daunting challenge for international peace and security. While continued efforts are under way in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism continues to spread throughout the region, as demonstrated by the recent attacks in Istanbul, Baghdad, Medina and beyond, which are particularly heinous for having been carried out during the Holy month of Ramadan. The Maldives strongly condemns those attacks, and extends its condolences and sympathies to the victims and the people who were affected by those acts of terrorism.

We also note with grave concern the continued repression of the rights of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the escalation of violence against Palestinians, including assaults, vandalism and the destruction of property. Despite the Israeli Government expressing support for an amicable two-State solution, it continues to violate its commitments under the Oslo Accords, and continue to designate the West Bank as an integral part of the State of Israel in its laws, official statements and the media. Numerous Israeli politicians have even expressed support for the complete formal annexation of the West Bank. Therefore, it is evident that in practice Israel does not recognize the right of a sovereign Palestinian State to exist.

Furthermore, Israel continues to implement settlement expansion policies in violation of international law. We are witnessing a complete and total de-legitimization of the grievances and aspirations of the Palestinian people, as their rights are being progressively denied through the expansion of such illegal settlements. The denial of the right to development of Palestine is a clear contradiction of the aspirations set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), which the entire world agreed to last year. The failure to remedy that situation creates a dangerous precedent

for the future. Therefore, the Maldives calls upon the Security Council to devise a practical, immediate and sustainable solution to that conflict and to take immediate action. The solution is not to have circular debates in the Council about how the current measures are not working, but rather to find a new approach that would produce practical results.

The Maldives, together with the majority of the international community, reaffirms its commitment to establishing an independent Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and taking its rightful place as a full Member of the United Nations.

In addition to the grave violations against Palestinians, the Maldives also condemns the Israeli violations of the territorial and sovereign rights of Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan. We call upon Israel to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions and immediately cease those actions, which are further compromising peace and security in the Middle East and violating international law.

The present instability in the Middle East is to a large degree rooted in long-standing political, social, ethnic and religious disputes that have no easy solution. Changing geopolitical conditions have brought various people into conflict, and they will ultimately have to learn, or re-learn, how to tolerate differences and live peacefully alongside one another, in accordance with the principles of international law, which is the cornerstone of world peace. Therefore, we cannot allow any State to continue to blatantly disregard those viable solutions for sustainable peace and to perpetuate the situation of conflict in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba supports the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The situation in the Middle East region remains a matter of constant concern for the international community. That has been reflected in the many previous debates held by the Security Council. However, despite repeated open debates in the Council on the issue, where we have witnessed overwhelming support for the Palestinian cause, this organ has so far failed to adopt a draft resolution demanding that Israel put an end to its aggressive policies and settlement practices. The inaction of the Council in the face of such practices is alarming. It is unacceptable that the Security Council continue to be held hostage to the veto, or the threat thereof, by the United States to prevent this organ from fulfilling its mandate and protecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Cuba reiterates its call on the Security Council to fulfil the responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and to adopt the necessary measures to demand that Israel immediately put an end to its occupation of Palestinian territory and other Arab territories, end the blockade against the Gaza Strip, stop the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements, cease the construciton of the separation wall on occupied Palestinian territory, halt the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian lands and property, end the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families and end the transfer of settlers into occupied Palestinian territory, among other violations of international law, international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

The Council should also hold Israel accountable for its aggressions and flagrant, massive and systematic violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, and for its war crimes and collective punishment against that people. The Israel's settlement campaign and prolonged impunity threaten the viability of a Palestinian State and affect the possibility of resolving the conflict in a fair, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful manner.

Cuba welcomes the regional and international efforts being made to resume peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, including the French peace initiative for a multilateral peace conference and the Arab Peace Initiative. We take note of the report of the Middle East Quartet. In this regard, we deplore attempts to equate the responsibilities of a people under occupation with those of the occupying Power. We reiterate that the Security Council must fulfil its obligation to promote a negotiated solution that guarantees an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

The only possible solution to the Palestinian question is the peaceful coexistence of two independent States, with the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem and within the pre-1967 borders,

in which the Palestinian people may exercise all their rights, including the right to self-determination. Cuba is convinced that the settlement of this long-standing conflict would help to greatly reduce the tensions experienced today the Middle East.

With respect to Palestine's 2011 application for recognition as a State Member of the United Nations, Cuba reaffirms its full support for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the Organization and calls on the Security Council to consider and accept that request without further delay. That is the will of the vast majority of States Members of the Organization. Otherwise, the General Assembly should act resolutely to decide the case.

On the situation in Syria, Cuba reiterates that it will be possible to achieve peace in that country only by respecting the right of the Syrian people to decide their own destiny. A political solution, reached through dialogue and negotiations without preconditions, is the only viable solution to the conflict in Syria. Cuba welcomes the extension of the cessation of hostilities and the new paths that it has opened with a view to acheivingt a political, peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict.

We support the Syrian people's aspirations to live in peace and choose their own destiny without outside interference. Those who have fueled the conflict from the outside, with the declared aim of imposing regime change, are responsible for the thousands of civilian victims of the conflict. We regret the loss of innocent lives as a result of this situation and condemn all acts of violence against the civilian population of that country.

The threat posed by extremist groups in Syria, some of which practice terrorist methods, is the main challenge facing the Arab nation. The fight against that scourge requires the assistance of the international community. Cuba reiterates that an interventionist agenda must not be promoted under the pretext of fighting terrorism. We demand the cessation of violations of the sovereignty of Syria and the withdrawal of a foreign military presence that does not enjoy the consent of or operational coordination with the Syrian Government, the only legitimately elected authority in the country. We recognize the efforts and cooperation of the Syrian Government in facilitating access to humanitarian aid, while reiterating that humanitarian assistance must be delivered in strict compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/182.

The Council is called on to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflicts in the Middle East that will safeguard the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of all States of the region. The peace, security, welfare and development deserved by all peoples, including those of Middle East, depend on the decisive action of this organ, under the powers conferred by the Charter of the United Nations. The General Assembly should also exercise all its powers under the Charter.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking the presidency of Japan for convening this open debate and the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Indonesia associates itself with the statements by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

The United Nations was founded to pursue international peace and security and to promote the equal rights and self-determination of people, among other things. Much progress has been recorded by the United Nations in those areas, including by assisting the liberation of peoples living under foreign occupation. Yet we must not be complacent. Resolving prolonged conflicts and ending foreign occupation remains the greatest challenge confronting the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Palestine-Israeli conflict is one such.

For far too long, the international community has witnessed inconsistency, and even betrayal, in the efforts to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict. The Council alone has adopted 89 resolutions on the conflict, some of which call for withdrawal of the Israeli occupation force. Regrettably, none has been respected, even by the institution that adopted them. Many times Indonesia has stated in the Council and many other relevant forums that ending the Israeli occupation is indispensable to resolving the Palestine-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian people must be accorded the opportunity to exercise their inalienable right to establish an independent State of Palestine, in accordance with the two-State vision.

In that regard, Indonesia underlines the importance of the ministerial conference held in Paris last month,

which reflected the enduring international commitment to peace between Palestine and Israel. As a participant in the ministerial conference, Indonesia stands ready to work with all relevant stakeholders on its follow-up, including in putting together packages of incentives for the resumption of the peace process. We will also work to ensure the successful convening of the international peace conference by the end of this year.

Indonesia takes note of the report of the Middle East Quartet with respect to the peace process between Palestine and Israel. While we appreciate the role of the Quartet in pursuing peace, Indonesia considers the report to be a disappointment. It fails to capture the very reason behind the Palestine-Israeli conflict, which is no other than the Israeli occupation. We should call a spade a spade. For over 60 years, the Palestinian people have been without a homeland. They have been robbed of their dignity and forced to live in subjugation. We do not condone violence, but failure to recognize the link between the violence and the prolonged occupation amounts to a denial of the frustrations of the Palestinian people. If we are to restart a credible peace process, the grief, anger and sense of despair of the Palestinian people must be acknowledged. I reiterate that violence cannot be condoned, but the longer the occupation takes place, the more violence the world is likely to see.

It is also disappointing to see the report place equal blame on Palestine and Israel, neglecting the fact that Palestine is under occupation. This notion of equal responsibility between Palestine and Israel is also inconsistent with the Geneva Conventions and various United Nations resolutions, including those of the Council, which assign to Israel the responsibilities of an occupying Power.

It is regrettable that such conclusions emerged in the Quartet report. In our view, they run counter to all the efforts to pursue peace between Palestine and Israel. However, our disappointment aside, Indonesia agrees with the Quartet that more efforts must be dedicated to advancing the two-State solution. A climate of trust must continue to be forged. The expansion of settlements must stop — not only is it illegal, it complicates the efforts to build trust. Along that line, it is very upsetting that the report says nothing about the illegal nature of the settlements.

On a different matter, all acts that contribute to the building and strengthening of cordial relations between Palestinian and Israeli communities must be promoted. The desire for peace must come from within both communities for it to be durable. Needless to say, violence must also be prevented. The Security Council must engage more energetically in the pursuit of peace. By continuing to remain on the sidelines, the Council allows the two-State solution to fade further away. Worse still, the Council's inaction adds to the sense of grief and anger of the Palestinian people and further undermines their belief in a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We certainly cannot let that happen, as we owe to the children of Palestine the basic promise of peace and human dignity that is at the foundation of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Meitzad (Israel): Once again, some of the speakers in the Chamber today have demonstrated that they will not let the facts confuse them when they decide to falsely attack Israel, rather than to establish a sincere, meaningful conversation about the situation. The remarks in the Council today can be interpreted only as a clear lack of knowledge or an explicit choice to perpetuate the biased approach against Israel in this house.

In our statement this morning we stated that the some might try to balance the criticism of Palestinian terrorism by condemning Israeli construction, and that some might even criticize the construction while ignoring Palestinian terrorism. Unfortunately, that prediction has came true too many times. Israel strongly rejects any attempts to draw moral equivalents between construction and terrorism. It is not only morally false, but it has also provided justification for terrorism.

The Iranian representative sat here and blamed Israel for all that is wrong in the Middle East, when in fact the true destabilizing force in the region is Iran. Not only is Iran the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, it also makes no secret about its intentions to seek the destruction of another Member State. I do not need to remind the representatives sitting in the Chamber today that this is the same Iran that launched a ballistic missile with the words "Israel should be wiped off the face of the Earth" written on its side. Just a week ago, Iran held its yearly demonstration of hate for Israel. Among crowds of people burning the Israeli and American flags and chanting "Death to Israel", the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' second in command threatened that its proxy,

Hizbullah, had more than 100,000 rockets in Lebanon, ready to be launched at Israel.

Hassan Nasrallah, the head of internationally recognized terrorist group Hizbullah, does not miss any opportunity to thank its main benefactor, Iran. Nasrallah admits that Hizbullah's funds and rockets come from the same source, that is, the generous Ayatollah of Tehran. To the Lebanese delegation, I would like to say: those living in glass houses should not throw stones. And those with terrorist organizations as part of their Governments should not criticize the most progressive and liberal democracy in the Middle East.

The representative of Kuwait, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the very same organization that just a week ago tried to make the case that attacks against Israel were not terrorism, today had the audacity to compare Israel to Da'esh. Are there no limits to what the OIC is willing to say?

Lastly, to my Palestinian colleagues in the Chamber, I would like to say that the only way to address the outstanding problem between the two sides is by joining us for direct negotiations. That is the only way to turn the vision of the two States for two peoples into a reality. Israel wants and prays for peace, but we cannot make any progress unless we put an end to terror and incitement and finally agree to direct, face-to-face negotiations. Peace will not come by evading tough decisions and compromises.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.